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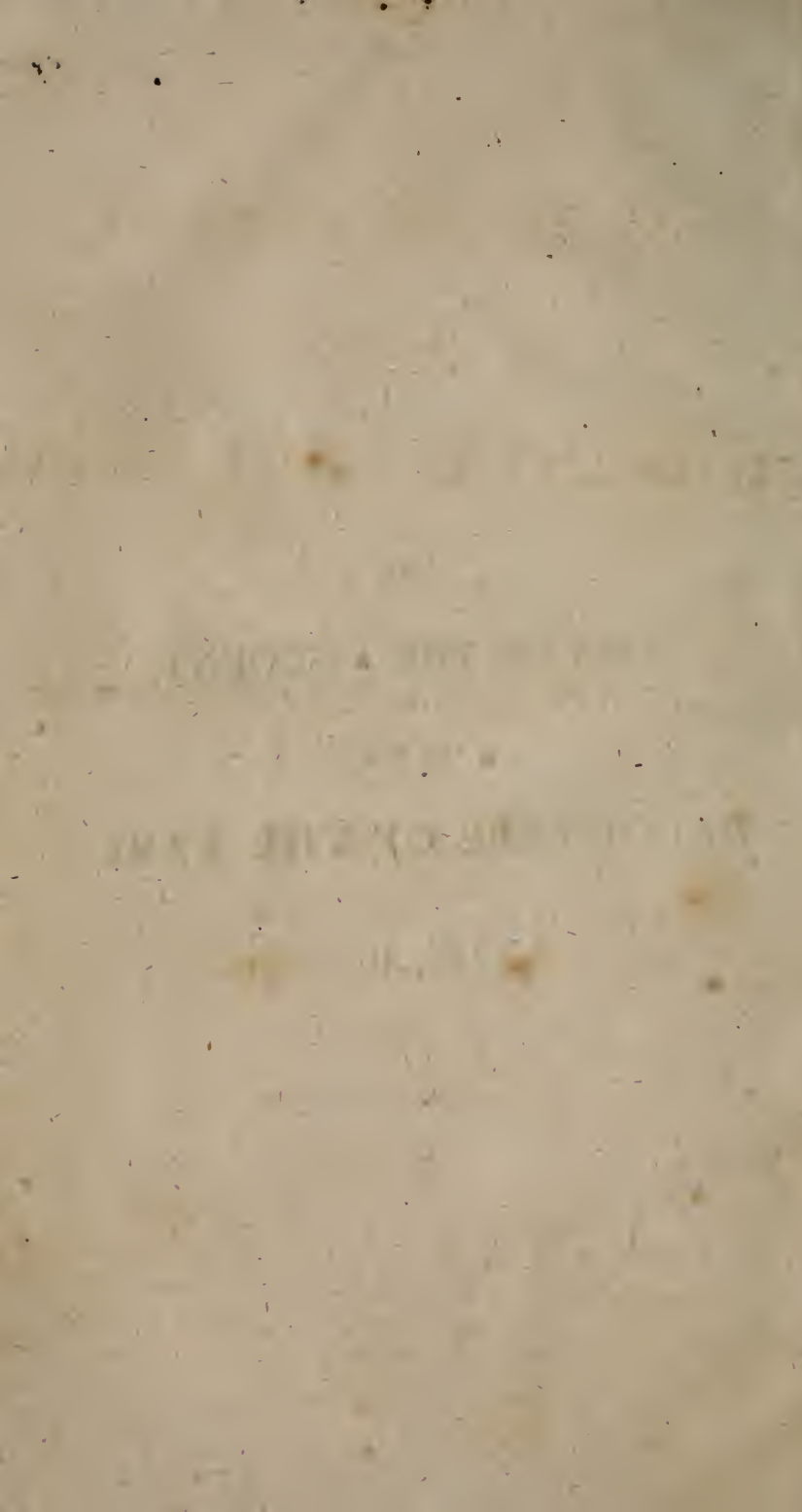
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THE
SONS OF THE VISCOUNT,
AND THE
DAUGHTERS OF THE EARL.
VOL. II.



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THE
SONS OF THE VISCOUNT,
AND THE
DAUGHTERS OF THE EARL,
A NOVEL.

DEPICTING RECENT SCENES IN FASHIONABLE LIFE.

BY A LADY.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

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THE
SONS OF THE VISCOUNT,
AND THE
DAUGHTERS OF THE EARL.

CHAPTER I.

AT length the important day arrived, and the lovely nieces of Lord De Courci, with palpitating hearts, descended to the drawing-room, where their uncle and the family waited to accompany them to St. James's. The dazzling beauty of Lady Elvira was now seen to advantage, and every one involuntarily declared their admiration. From a large mirror, which was opposite to where she stood, Lady Elvira beheld with secret exultation her own faultless form: her sparkling blue eyes, animated by the consciousness of superior

loveliness, seemed to vie with the lustre of the diamonds which she wore; and she received the compliments of her relations with as much nonchalance and gaiety as if she had been presented the year before; while her sister trembled so excessively, that she could hardly return the embraces of her aunts, who endeavoured all they could to raise her spirits.

The Duchess of Aimhigh, and the two eldest of her unmarried daughters, were ready to receive them. The buzz of admiration which ran through the court soon declared the general impression which their loveliness had excited. In returning into the anti-chamber, after they had been presented, Lady Angeline was so completely overpowered that she fainted in the arms of Lord Desmond, who tenderly supported her to a window-seat. She revived: and slowly opening her eyes, met those of Henry Fortescue, who at that moment was passing with his bride to the drawing-room. He turned pale, and cast his eyes on the ground. Sidney followed with Cecil; and Lady Elvira, as she encountered his glance of fond

affection, felt at that moment all her tenderness revive.

“There! there!” said Lady Clementina; “those are the handsome sons of Lord Foretscue. The first was Harry and his wife; and the last, with the laughing eyes and glowing cheeks, was his brother Sydney. I hope mamma will wait until they return, for I long to speak to them.”

Lady Desmond, who had seen the beloved children of the Viscount, now inquired with considerable agitation if her niece was well enough to walk to her carriage.

“Oh yes,” cried her ladyship, rising with quickness, “I shall do very well with Robert’s assistance.”

They were moving forward, when the Duchess came up with two very elegant, fashionable young men, and introduced them as the sons of the Earl of Dorrington. Lady Desmond, to whom they were slightly known, readily accepted of their offer to assist the ladies to regain their carriages; and the eldest of the brothers had the supreme felicity to take charge of the beautiful Lady Elvira, while Lady Angeline clung

to the arm of her cousin. The increasing crowd obliged them to stop while the youngest of the Wrottesleys went in search of the carriages.

Again the Fortescues passed; again Lady Elvira and Sidney exchanged looks of remembrance; but Lady Angeline kept her eyes fixed on the ground, not having courage to raise them until they were gone by.

Lady Desmond said in a low tremulous voice to her son: "Those are the Fortescue family, whom you have heard your uncle mention." Lord Desmond, whose eyes were still fixed on the door through which they had passed, said in reply to his mother: "The tallest of the ladies, I suppose, is Miss Fortescue. What a lovely creature she seems to be!"

Herbert Wrottesley now came up, and told them their carriages were waiting. Lord De Courci was not yet ready; and the Duchess had so many to speak to, that it was impossible for her to get away for some time: they accordingly hastened to their carriages, but not before Everard Wrottesley had inquired of Lady Elvira if

she was to be at the Duchess's ball; and told her, by the expressive language of a pair of fine dark eyes, that he thought her, the sweetest of all human beings.

Lady Angeline joyfully laid aside her costly dress, and arraying herself in a simple muslin robe, felt that it was more congenial to her feelings: while Lady Elvira unwillingly took off her's, she looked again, and again, at her own captivating person, and smiled exultingly at the conviction that it had already secured her another admirer; then recollecting the glances of Sidney, she hastily cast away her diamonds, and flew to her sister's apartments.

“ My dear Angeline,” cried her volatile ladyship, “ did you notice Sidney, as he passed by us, with his sister, I suppose? She is a very handsome girl. I was rather surprised to see so much vivacity and ease in the countenance of Sidney; his brother, I am sure, looked more like a despairing lover than a happy husband. I am half offended at the tranquillity of Sidney's looks, and

will mortify him by my indifference and neglect at the Duchess's ball."

"Go to the glass, my sister," replied Lady Angeline, raising her head from her hand, on which she had been pensively leaning: "view your own happy face, before you are angry with poor Sidney."

Her sister coloured. "Henry's wife," said she, wishing to change the subject, "is a pretty little woman, and her dress was exceedingly becoming: I think they were the handsomest couple at the Drawing-room; but he looked so pale as he passed, and started so when he saw you fainting in the arms of Robert, that I declare if I were his wife I should be a little inclined to jealousy."

The cheeks of Lady Angeline now crimsoned with blushes; but they were the next moment as pale as death.—"I dare say," continued her sister, "that they will all be at the Duchess's ball: poor Sidney! how will he contrive to speak to me? I shall really enjoy his confusion." Lady Angeline looked amazed. "It will be so entertaining

to see him watching every opportunity to say a word, and wishing my partner in the Red Sea, that prevents him. I have some idea that the Duchess means to give us the Wrottesleys for our partners. Apropos, Angeline, do you not think the eldest a very fine young man?"

"I scarcely saw him," said her sister. "You are such a quiz, Angeline. What has Nature given you such a pair of beautiful blue eyes for, do you think, but to make proper use of them, to be sure? It is a pity there are no nunneries in England; you would make a charming lady abbess, and Harry Fortescue a good father confessor. Come, let us go down to dinner: I dare say my uncle is returned." She then ran down stairs, followed by her sister, who beheld with increasing sorrow the thoughtless conduct of her beloved Elvira.

"My nieces," cried Lord De Courci with proud affection, "were esteemed the handsomest girls at Court. I saw with delight the admiration their beauty called forth, even from the lips of royalty. At the Duchess's ball, Elvira, you will be intro-

duced to the chief of our young nobility : take care of your heart, my love ; many will lose their's ; but I shall expect that my fascinating niece will remember the rank she holds in society, and the power of her own charms."

Lord Desmond turned towards his youngest cousin: " My uncle," said he, " has paid you the highest compliment, by thinking all advice on this subject unnecessary. Dear Angeline, let me be one of the happy men who will have the honour of being your partner that night."

She smiled on him affectionately. " I am engaged by the Duchess for the first dances: I shall only dance two others, and you shall be my partner." He kissed her fair hand with brotherly affection, and turning to Lady Elvira, said gaily: " It would be useless for me to solicit your hand, my beautiful cousin: I shall content myself by keeping at a humble distance, and prudently avoid so dangerous a tempter."

" You are very gallant, indeed," said she, " and make a merit of necessity. I love you very well, Robert, but I shall not

dance with my cousin while I can get any other partner. You may secure the hand of one of the Duchess's fair daughters, which will be more agreeable than that of a relation."

"Saucy puss!" replied Lord Desmond. "Your sister has kindly taken pity upon me; and your ladyship may be glad to come to me, after all, before the night is passed."

"I wonder Angeline dances at all," said Lady Elvira: "she is so unaccountably shy, that I thought she would never gain courage to dance more than she is obliged, out of compliment to the Duchess."

"I should not," replied her sister, "but that I shall feel perfectly at ease with my cousin."

"You must endeavour, my little Angeline," said the Earl, "to get rid of your timidity, which is painful to yourself and distressing to your friends. Take a lesson or two of Elvira."

"Angeline has no cause for diffidence either in this instance or any other," replied Lady Dorothea: "she dances with a

grace and ease that few girls can boast of; indeed, I know of no one accomplishment that she does not excel in."

"It is for that reason," continued her uncle, "that I wish her to shew them to advantage: she will, however, gain more courage as she mixes with the world." Lady Desmond and her son were silent; each, however, thought that her ladyship required no improvement.

Again the heart of Lady Elvira throbbed with rapture as the day of the ball arrived: she longed with impatience to behold Sidney, yet she resolved to try the strength of his affection by pretended indifference.

"You look so lovely, Angeline, to-night, that I am half afraid of you: I have made up my mind to trifle with the elder Wrottesley, but shall not succeed, if he is destined to be your partner."

Lady Angeline did indeed look lovely: her figure was too petite to appear well in a court dress; but in that of the ball-room the proportions of her slender and elegant form were seen to advantage. She wore a white satin silk, and over it a robe of the

richest lace ; a girdle of diamonds encircled her waist ; her neck and arms were likewise ornamented with the same. Lady Elvira's dress differed not from her sister's, only that her fine dark hair was confined by the same coronet she wore at the birth-day. In compliment to the wishes of her uncle, Lady Angeline drew from her rich chesnut tresses a wreath of wild roses, and substituted in its place the brilliant jewels. The fashion of the times but ill agreed with the delicacy and purity of her mind : she blushed at the half-uncovered bosom and shoulders of her sister, and ordered her maid to raise a little higher the lace tucker which but ill concealed the gentle swell of her own little firm white bosom.

Lord De Courci sighed deeply, as he committed to the care of his nephew the lovely sisters. His exiled son, whose imprudent marriage had estranged him from his family, would, but for that, have now shared the glory of escorting his cousins ; and the earl, as he handed Lady Elvira to the carriage, found his heart melt at the recollection of the absent Reginald. The

pride of high birth soon, however, drove away those tender emotions so favourable to the cause of his only son.

The first dance was nearly over, when Lady Desmond and her nieces arrived at the Duchess of Aimhigh's. On their names being announced, her Grace instantly came forward to receive them.

"You look divinely," said she, patting the shoulders of Lady Elvira; "but why are you so late? Your partner has been waiting for you this hour." Then whispering to her youngest daughter, who instantly quitted her side, she continued—"I assure you that I found it difficult to reply to the many inquiries that have been made concerning you two girls: already have you done a great deal of mischief, and taken captive several hearts."

Her daughter now returned with the sons of the Earl of Dorrington, whom the Duchess presented as the partners she had designed for the beautiful sisters. The glow of pleasure which overspread the face of Everard Wrottesley, as he exultingly led Lady Elvira to the dance, was noticed by

Lady Clementina, who chanced to stand next to her.

“I am so glad to see you!” said her ladyship: “do you know, that I have such news to tell you! Mamma says she is certain you have made a conquest of Everard Wrottesley: he came home and dined with us on the birth-day, and could talk of nothing else but your ladyship. Half the girls in the room to-night are ready to die with envy at the impatience he testified for your arrival.”

Lady Elvira cast her eyes towards her partner, and met his, fixed on herself, with evident admiration. The dance now began, and she soon perceived that she was the object of general attention: her heart beat with secret satisfaction, and she listened to the warm praises passed on her beauty by her partner with self-approbation. At the conclusion of the dance he led her into the refreshment-room, and flew to procure her what she had desired.

With her usual vivacity she was talking to her sister, when, raising her eyes, she beheld Sidney gazing on her with inex-

pressible fondness: she coloured, as he involuntarily half came towards her; but the return of Mr. Wrottesley relieved her from her confusion, and she saw Sidney turn to speak to Lady Lucy, with whom he was engaged for the next dances. The Duchess nodded as she passed with Miss Fortescue: she called Lord Desmond, and presented him with the hand of the blooming Cecil. The fine countenance of the young lord expressed his happiness, while Lady Angeline cast a look on her sister, which was perfectly understood.

They now returned to the ball-room, at the top of which stood Lady Clementina, and Henry Fortescue; and next to them his bride, with the Duchess of Aimhigh's eldest son. The dance began: Lady Angeline felt the hand of Henry tremble as he touched her own, and she kept her eyes fixed on the ground, perfectly inattentive to the praises of her partner. Sidney ventured to press her hand, but Henry kept a guard over his inclinations. The eyes of the former told Lady Elvira that she was still beloved, but her's discovered no an-

swering emotions; and Sidney, while he darted an angry glance at his more fortunate rival, felt all the pangs of wounded affection fill his bosom. Lady Lucy complained of his dullness, but Sidney heard her not: every feeling was absorbed in one—the dread of having become indifferent to Lady Elvira. Eagerly he watched every look, every motion of this beloved object: she smiled sweetly on young Wrottesley, and Sidney suffered all the horrors of the jealous.

At the conclusion of the dance a change of partners took place, and Herbert Wrottesley with real regret was obliged to resign the hand of Lady Angeline, who, taking the arm of her cousin, sauntered into the card-rooms, where they found Lady Desmond. After answering her kind inquiries, they continued to make their observations on the various characters they saw: Lord Desmond spoke in raptures of his interesting partner; and Lady Angeline with pleasure joined in her praise; for, independent of her personal attractions, she

was the sister of Henry Fortescue—of him to whom she felt eternally obliged.

Sidney's eyes alone reminded Lady Elvira of the past: not daring to address her, he trusted to their silent eloquence to portray his feelings. Her heart reproached her, yet she determined to punish him for what she imagined was his unnatural freedom, and therefore listened with increased attention to her admiring partner, who had again engaged her for the supper-dances.

With trembling solicitude Cécil watched the eyes of Sidney: she saw the flattering attention her ladyship paid to Mr. Wrottesley, and the changeful countenance of her brother too plainly indicated his agitations. “Ah! my Henry,” said she, in a low voice, “my fears are great, my heart misgives me, that all beautiful as Lady Elvira appears, she is not worthy the love of our Sidney: her sister would not, I am sure, act the part of a coquette.”

Henry, who had observed with a feeling very like indignation the altered behaviour of Lady Elvira, said, as he pressed the

hand of his sister, "I also tremble for Sidney: you do justice, my dear Cecil, to Lady Angeline; she would not, indeed, give pain to the heart of a lover."

"I already feel a regard for the sweet girl," replied his sister: "but here comes Lucinda; she looks fatigued."

"Are you not tired, my love?" said Henry, affectionately, as he led her to a seat: "you have not sat down one of the dances: I am afraid you will exert yourself too much."

"Oh, no, my dearest Henry; you need not be alarmed on my account: I can never sit still while I hear the inspiring notes of a ball-room: I shall dance as long as I can get a good partner. But, Harry, what lovely women are the Lady De Courcis!" Then whispering, she said, "Are they not the daughters of the late Earl, whom the Viscount has commanded us to avoid?" Henry replied in the affirmative. "Lady Elvira is infinitely more beautiful than her sister; but how strange it was that Cecil should dance with their cousin: he is a very handsome young man."

Miss Fortescue blushed. "He seems also to be very amiable," replied her husband, "and appears to be particularly attached to Lady Angeline." At that moment they both passed, and her ladyship smiled so affectionately on her cousin, that Henry immediately concluded her heart was devoted to him. Happy Desmond, thought he, to possess the affections of such a woman.

At the supper-table her Grace contrived to place the sisters by the side of the Wrottesleys, and Lord Desmond had the felicity of sitting by Miss Fortescue. If her sweet and modest deportment charmed the young lord, she was equally pleased by the highly interesting countenance and winning manners of the son of Lady Emma: she felt her heart soften towards Lord Desmond, on account of his mother, and she viewed that mother, whose pensive face and humid eye bespoke a mind but ill at ease, with a reverence and affection that might increase, but could never diminish.

Julia Aveland was seated by Sidney, and strove to withdraw his attention from the

too fascinating Lady Elvira: vain was the attempt. Sidney felt more than ever convinced that she was lost to him for ever: he saw her continue to listen with approving smiles to the conversation of Lord Dorrington's second son: he saw her avoid turning her eyes towards the place where he was seated, and he tried to rouse his pride by the recollection of her inconstancy; yet one glance directed to her enchanting person subdued the momentary resentment.

The dances again commenced. Lord Desmond once more led forth the lovely daughter of his enemy, while Lady Angeline sat a tranquil spectator of the lively scene, her mind occupied by ideas that made her unconscious of what was passing.

"Dear me," cried Lady Lucy, seating herself by her side, "I wonder what is the matter with Sidney Fortescue; he used to be one of the best partners in the world—so lively, so good-humoured; and to-night he is quite dull and absent. Surely he cannot have lost his heart already to your all-conquering sister, for his eyes follow her wherever she goes. No, that cannot

be the cause, or he would have endeavoured to secure her for a partner: perhaps she is like some lady he is in love with, and that is the reason he gazes so constantly on your sister. Don't you think it is?"

Lady Angeline, who rejoiced that she had found an excuse for Sidney, replied in the affirmative: in her heart she pitied him, and condemned her sister's levity. Had she not loved him, thought the tender Angeline, she should not have encouraged him. Her kind sympathy was observed by the agitated Sidney, and he gave her a look of grateful remembrance.

With pleasure Lady Angeline now heard her aunt request that her carriage might be called. The Wrottesleys were ready to attend them, and Everard raised the beautiful hand of the young enchantress to his lips, as he took leave of her for the night. Their ride was a silent one: each seemed occupied by their own private reflections; and upon their arrival in Grosvenor Square, hastily retired to their separate apartments.

The next morning Lord Desmond rallied Lady Elvira upon the pointed attention

paid her by Mr. Wrottesley: his uncle appeared pleased by this intelligence. "If it is true," said he, "that Elvira has made a conquest of young Wrottesley, she may be allowed to be vain of the prize. He is a young man of great expectations, just come to the possession of an immense estate, allied to the first families of the United Kingdom, and inheriting all the talent, sense, and merit of his elder brother. He has not long returned from making the tour of Europe; and Fame reports him and Herbert Wrottesley to be two of the most polished men of the age."

"His appearance gives credit to the assertion," replied his nephew; "but Elvira is the best judge: she danced with him the chief part of the night."

The earl turned to his eldest niece: "What is your opinion of Everard Wrottesley, my dear girl?"

"I like him very much," said she, with her usual careless air: "he is an admirable dancer, a charming companion, and a very elegant man."

"So, so," cried the Earl significantly;

“and who were the partners of my little Angeline?”

“I only danced four dances, uncle—two with the brother of Mr. Wrottesley, and the others with my cousin.”

“And you, Sir—but I suppose you had so many handsome partners, that you cannot enumerate them all.” He then inquired who were there: a great many names were mentioned; but that of Fortescue was purposely avoided by them all. While they were talking, the carriage of the Duchess of Aimhigh stopped at the door, and in a few minutes her Grace entered, accompanied by the two Wrottesleys and the Earl of Dorrington: the latter renewed with pleasure his intimacy with Lady Desmond, while his sons were anxiously inquiring after the health of the beautiful sisters.

The Duchess called Lady Elvira aside, under pretence of looking at some fine exotics. “You ought to thank me very much; I assure you,” said she, “for this visit: I had determined to stay at home all to-day, but Lord Dorrington and his sons called, and pressed me so earnestly to

introduce them to your uncle, that I could not refuse. You have taken poor Everard captive for life: he declares that he never before beheld so perfect a beauty." Lady Elvira's heart beat violently. "He is no mean conquest, I assure you, my dear girl: all the young women have set their caps at him, but you have gained the prize."

She stayed not for a reply, but returned to the couch of Lady Desmond. "The Marchioness of Teviotdale gives a masquerade," said her Grace, "this day fortnight; of course you have received cards." Lady Desmond replied in the affirmative. "I hope you mean to go?"

"No; but my brother does; and Robert and my nieces will accompany him."

"I am glad of that," replied her Grace; "for my girls would be terribly disappointed if their favourites were not there. You, my lord," turning to the Earl of Dorrington, "are I know to be of the party; but your sons, I presume, will decline going." At the same time she gave a significant look towards Everard Wrot-

tesley, who had just taken the hand of Lady Elvira.

“Your Grace is mistaken,” said he, gaily; “I am not partial to an English masquerade; but this holds out too many attractions for me to resist making one of the motly group.”

“My daughters bid me tell you,” continued her Grace, turning towards the sisters, “that they will call in a day or two; I suppose, to consult with you about your characters. I shall certainly go with them, for I enjoy a lively scene as well as the youngest of them.”

“I know of no one who supports a character like your Grace,” replied Lord De Courci; “and your being there is the principal inducement with me to attend.”

After the departure of the Duchesse and her companions, the Earl seriously congratulated Lady Elvira upon having gained the attention of such an accomplished lover as Everard Wrottesley. “Once, my dear niece,” said his lordship, with evident emotion, “I had different views for you, but they are now at an end; and I shall

therefore espouse the cause of young Wrottesley. I know of no young man whose expectations are higher than his."

Lady Angeline cast a look towards her sister, who was adjusting her bracelet with an air of seeming indifference. Anxious to know the state of her mind, she took an opportunity, when they were alone, of inquiring what were her real sentiments respecting the son of Lord Dorrington.

"Dearest Elvira, do not encourage his addresses; do not trifle with the peace and happiness of an amiable man. I felt quite distressed the other night at the ball, on seeing the extreme agitation of poor Sidney."

"Poor fellow!" replied Lady Elvira: "I should be very sorry for him, had he not looked so gay and unconcerned on the birth-day, that I could not help punishing him a little for his good looks."

"Ah, Elvira! might not the very liveliness you complain of arise from the delight he felt at once more beholding you?"

"Perhaps it might; and I am sorry now that I did not give him one consoling look

before I went away. Poor Sidney! I believe he loves me still."

Lady Angeline looked amazed at her sister. "You believe, Elvira! Did he not give you one of the strongest proofs a man could give of his love? Poor Sidney!" said she, while her eyes filled with tears, "my heart bleeds for you."

"What is the matter now, Angeline? One would suppose that I had really promised to marry Everard Wrottesley, and abandon Sidney, by your lamentations. You forget surely that you were most violently against his interest at one time, and now, forsooth, it is—'Poor Sidney, how my heart bleeds for you.' Pray be a little more consistent, Angeline, in your conduct."

"I hope I am perfectly consistent," replied her sister: "would that you were equally so, Elvira. When I advised you to shun all interviews with Sidney, you had not then determined upon making him your husband; you had not solemnly promised to live for him alone. Deeply as I regret your having made the promise, I

should now be the last person in the world to wish you to violate it."

"And you advise me then to act in direct opposition to the desires of my uncle? You advise me, in short, to disregard the fury of the Viscount, the prudent counsel of Henry, the displeasure of all my relations, and to run away with Sidney the first opportunity."

"No such thing," said Lady Angeline, with a warmth quite unusual to her: "I am an enemy to all private marriages, and still more to elopements. But I see no positive reason why you should treat with unkindness and scorn a man who ran every risk for your sake, and who would willingly have encountered even the resentment of a father he loved. Surely the sacrifice he was so ready to make deserved at least from you a far different conduct."

Lady Angeline hastily left the room, her bosom filled with the tenderest concern for Sidney, and indignant at the heartless conduct of her sister.

CHAPTER II.

SIDNEY, in a state of mind bordering on distraction, returned to his father's; and Henry, who had seen with painful surprise the strange coquetish behaviour of the Earl's daughter, followed him to his chamber, as soon as Mrs. Fortescue had retired to her dressing-room. He found him, as he had feared, in the deepest affliction: all his endeavours to tranquillize him proved ineffectual. "Beloved Sidney," said he, "moderate your grief. Lady Elvira is unworthy this emotion—unworthy such a heart as your's: rather rejoice that she did not become your wife before her true character was unfolded; then indeed, my brother, these agonies would be just."

Sidney raised his streaming eyes to the compassionate face of Henry.—"Oh! how I loved her," said he: "how I adored her!

but she is faithless, and I am wretched.—My father! my father!” he continued, in a voice of agony, “thy son now suffers the punishment of disobedience.” Then softening his voice: “Is it possible that she could so soon have forgotten her vows of fidelity and love? Is it possible, that while my kiss was yet warm on her cheek, she could listen to the praise of another?—Oh, that I could but speak to her; but remind her of her promised affection; of my never-dying attachment; and then expire at her feet!” He sunk on the bosom of Henry, whose tears fell on the convulsed face of his brother.

“My dearest Sidney, hear me, I conjure you: listen to the voice of your Henry, who enters deeply into your present feelings. Sidney, my beloved Sidney, hear me.”

Sidney raised his languid head. Despair had taken possession of his handsome features. “My Henry, I know what you would say—but Elvira is entwined with my existence—I cannot live without her.” He sunk again on the bosom of his brother.

Henry perceived that the present moment was not a proper one to reason with Sidney; he therefore endeavoured to rouse him from his dangerous insensibility, by starting the idea that Lady Elvira's conduct was the result of a coquetish disposition, and that perhaps she only meant to try the strength of his affection for herself. It had the desired effect.

"I breathe again," exclaimed Sidney. "Oh! Henry, you have saved my life!—And do you think such was her intention? Alas! had I not already given her sufficient proof of my unutterable fondness? Yet I will cling to this last hope—she may still be faithful.—Oh, how supremely beautiful she looked—how divinely fair! Such a woman, Henry, may be allowed to listen to the universal admiration she inspires."

Henry did not dare to interrupt him.

"Could I but see her again before we leave Town! But that is impossible. Could I but hear from those sweet lips a renewal of the tenderness she once professed, I should be satisfied.—Oh! Henry, you know not how firm, how fixed is my affection

for that enchanting woman." Henry sighed deeply. "The day after to-morrow we return to the Abbey: no opportunity affords itself of my seeing her again until the masquerade: but then—" and his eyes sparkled as he spoke, "then, Henry, my disguise will enable me to speak to her; to touch her hand; to hear from herself that I still am dear to her."

He seemed so revived by this thought, that his brother would not have damped the transient pleasure for the world: embracing him affectionately, he rejoiced to leave him more composed, and returned to the apartment of his sleeping wife.

In the family circle at the Abbey, Sidney's dejection was again noticed by his father; again all his parental solicitude was called forth, and he strove by increased tenderness to raise the drooping spirits of his eldest son. The amiable Julia Aveland contributed all in her power to amuse the melancholy Sidney, and felt repaid if he praised her voice, or if by chance she caught the smile of approbation which for a moment animated his countenance. Deeply

interested by the pensiveness of so young a man, Julia's voice and features expressed all that she felt, whenever she addressed him: the sympathizing tenderness of her dove-like eyes, the affectionate earnestness she displayed to entertain him, by degrees attracted the notice of the love-sick youth. He felt grateful for such marked attention from so handsome a girl, and he insensibly became pleased and diverted in her company.

The Viscount silently beheld the kind endeavours of Miss Aveland, and hoped that she might ultimately prove successful. She stood high in his favour; her personal attractions were many, and her mental ones still more numerous. Highly accomplished, and heiress to a large fortune, she was yet modest and unassuming: the desire of dissipating the inward vexation of Sidney alone conquered her natural diffidence; and to succeed in this she exerted every talent she possessed.

The kind and grateful heart of Sidney was not insensible to her merits or her sympathy: all that a soul devotedly attached

to another could bestow he gave to Julia Aveland; while Henry and Cecil were deceived by his apparent serenity: for love, the most ardent that ever warmed a human bosom, continued to feed secretly upon the repose of Sidney. Hope, however, had not quite deserted him: he counted with feverish impatience the days as they passed, looking forward to that fixed for the masquerade, as the one which was to decide his fate for ever.

Mrs. Fortescue silently lamented that she was not to be there; yet felt ashamed to own, so soon after her nuptials, that she had set her heart upon any thing but the society of her husband. Her countenance, however, betrayed her inward chagrin, and Henry saw with regret that the happiness of his wife did not depend solely on himself. He would willingly have anticipated her wish, but his father was to be consulted in this case: the Viscount had accompanied them to the Abbey to stay six weeks; and he felt it a duty not to trifle with the time or temper of his father. Cecil, who was the beloved repository of his thoughts while

he was single, no longer continued his confidant. The noble mind of Henry generously resolved to conceal in his own bosom whatever cause he might now have of inquietude: he felt that his wife ought to be the loved participator of his joys, the tender soother of his pains; and as he saw that Lucinda would be too much engrossed by the dissipated amusements of life to become the friend of his bosom, he resolved that no other, not even his sister, should fill her place.

The sorrows of Sidney, however, became their principal conversation. Cecil, as was always her custom, rose early, as well as her brothers, and when the weather permitted, walked before breakfast. At these times, Julia Aveland took the offered arm of Sidney; and Cecil, as usual, was the companion of Henry, who scrupled not to disclose his fears respecting Lady Elvira; while his sister, who felt how utterly incapable she was herself of such cruel inconstancy, wept at the idea of Sidney's misfortune, in having placed his hopes of happiness on so unworthy an object. She noticed to Henry

the evident partiality of her friend Julia, and prayed that the Almighty might enable her brother to transfer his tenderness to the amiable and compassionate Miss Aveland.

With anxious solicitude she saw him quit the Abbey the day before the masquerade, and followed him to the door, that she might again embrace him. "Promise me," said she, "dearest Sidney, that you will return on the fourth day." Her swimming eyes and faltering voice affected her brother, who, returning her embrace, bade her be certain of seeing him at that time: then gallantly kissing the fair hand of Julia Aveland, he leaped into his carriage with forced spirits, followed by the secret blessings of the lovely Miss Aveland.

Once more in Town, which contained the idol of his affections, Sidney seemed to breathe more freely; and Robarts, who at the desire of the Viscount attended him, rubbed his hands for joy, as he saw the smile of pleasure and expectation again dimple the cheek of his favourite, whose late dejection had sent forth many a sigh from

the bosom of this faithful domestic. Sidney called the next day on the Duchess of Aim-high, and found her Grace alone in the drawing-room.

“ Ah,” said she, holding out her hand, “ how agreeably you have surprised me! I was afraid you would not come to Town for the masquerade: my girls are gone to Lord De Courci’s: they cannot live three days without seeing his nieces; and this masquerade occupies all their thoughts. I verily believe that they have changed their dresses twenty times, and have hardly fixed on them yet. What character have you chosen?”

“ Excuse me from telling you,” said he gaily. “ I wish to surprise your lovely daughters, as they are from home; and will trust to your Grace’s kindness not to say that I am in Town.”

“ It will be excellent fun,” replied the Duchess. “ I mean to personate our good old Queen Elizabeth; and Clementina and Lucy have chosen to be flower-girls: should they change their minds, I will let you know.”

Sidney thanked her Grace. He longed, yet dared not inquire if she knew what characters the nieces of Lord De Courci had selected."

"I am surprised," said the Duchess, "that Mrs. Fortescue could remain in the country when such an amusement was going on in Town: she will soon grow tired of the old Abbey: we shall have her amongst us before long, I dare say."

"Your Grace forgets that it is the honeymoon," replied Sidney: "but we shall all return to Town in less than a month." Then kissing the hand of the bonny Duchess, he took leave, fearing that her daughters might return and spoil his plan.

He had not decided what character he should assume, when recollecting that as a fortune-teller he would have the best opportunity of speaking to Lady Elvira, he called at the warehouse, and ordered a complete gipsy dress. No note arriving from the Duchess, he concluded that they had contented themselves at last.

Robarts, who assisted to equip his young master in his feminine attire, with diffi-

culty refrained from laughing, to see how ignorantly he went about the adjustment of his new apparel. "I beg your pardon, Sir," said he, "but give me leave to tie your petticoat."—"Ah, do, my good fellow," replied Sidney, laughing heartily at his own metamorphose; for I am a bad hand in tying on a petticoat."

Robarts now helped him on with his gown, and fixed on his handkerchief very neatly. Then placing on his large gipsy hat, and red cloak, he handed him his mask.

"You ought to have a child at your back, Sir, to finish your equipment: a gipsy is nothing, without one or two children at her back."

"But the mask is that of a young girl," said Sidney, "and not an ugly one neither. I think, Robarts, I shall do very well without the children at my back."

"God bless you, Sir!" cried Robarts, warmly: "I hope I shall yet live to see the day when you will have some dear little ones of your own."

"Well, Robarts, I hope you will, and you shall help to nurse them."

“That I will, that I will,” cried he, lighting his favourite down stairs, who, with his usual goodnature, went into the parlour, and had all the servants of the house called up to look at him, before he went to his carriage: Beloved by every domestic of the family, they saw him depart for the lively amusement of the night; nor little dreamt that the master, whose affability and kindness had so considerately afforded them pleasure, was only gone to meet the bitterest disappointment.

On entering the superb mansion of the Marchioness of Teviotdale, Sidney’s heart beat high with love and expectation: many characters had arrived before him, and on his entrance crowded round the pretty gipsy, eager to have their fortunes told. Animated by the hope of not only seeing, but conversing with Lady Elvira de Courci, Sidney gave a loose to his vivacity, and disguising the natural tone of his voice, replied to all their questions with a brilliancy of wit and spirit that excited a considerable deal of curiosity. “Who can she be?” ran through the room: for he had so

completely feminized his voice, that all mistook him for a woman. He saw the Duchess of Aimhigh and her daughters coming towards him, and determined to remain unknown.

“Tell me,” said Lady Clementina, lingering behind, and holding out her white hand, “who I am to have for a husband.”

“My pretty one,” he replied gaily, “you must give me one of your nosegays before I unfold the mysteries of my art.”

“Choose,” cried her ladyship; “they are all at your service.”

Sidney took a rose and a sprig of myrtle, and placed them in his bosom; then looking at her hand, “Alas!” said he, “I see by this line that you have already been crossed in love: you set your heart upon one who was engaged to another: he is lost to you, but do not despair; you will soon marry a rich man, and a great man, who will buy all your nosegays, and make you a lady.”

The inquisitive fair one, not very well pleased by the first part of his speech, asked

if she could tell her the name of her future husband. Sidney whispered in her ear a well-known title. Angry, and wondering who it could be, her ladyship ran away after the Duchess and her sister.

A group of figures now advanced: among them was a friar leading two nuns, followed by a ballad-singer, whom he instantly recognized to be Lord Desmond, and judged that the others were Earl De Courci and his nieces. They were soon joined by two elegant young men, dressed as Highland chiefs. In a few minutes the tallest of the nuns separated from her companions, and took the arm of one of the chiefs. Sidney watched with trembling anxiety all their movements, and contrived to pass and re-pass them frequently. He heard their voices, and every doubt vanished: it was Lady Elvira and the Honourable Everard Wrottesley.

Mad with jealousy, he continued to follow them. He heard the Highland chief in earnest conversation with the nun—love was their theme. He saw through the mask the bright blue eyes of Lady Elvira

turned on his rival, while she listened to his avowal of affection with evident satisfaction; and Sidney with difficulty supported himself against the window of the apartment. His head swam, the lamps appeared to dance before his eyes: fortunately a couch was near him, on which he sunk, and remained for some minutes lost to the noise and bustle which surrounded him. Recovering, he rose, and walked slowly to the refreshment-room: a glass of water revived him, and he determined to make one effort to speak to his faithless mistress. On turning to quit the chamber, he perceived Lady Lucy and the object of his solicitude coming towards him.

“We have been looking for you,” said the latter with a lively air: “the fame of your knowledge has just reached us: come with us, dear gipsy, we want to speak to you in private.” Each took a hand of Sidney, and led him into one of the vacant apartments.

“Now,” cried Lady Lucy, joyfully, “let us hear our destinies.”

“I never tell before any one,” replied

Sidney: "let this fair nun retire, while I disclose the hidden fate that awaits you."

"No," said Lady Lucy, "you shall tell her first, while I run and keep the Highland chief in conversation. Be as quick as you can."

Sidney now found himself alone with Lady Elvira, who eagerly inquired what was her fortune. Trembling with unextinguished tenderness, he took her hand, and with an effort of all his firmness said, "It would have been better for mankind, fair nun, had you continued in the retirement from which you have so lately emerged: it is your destiny to be adored by many; but faithless as you are beautiful, my art reveals not the highly-favoured man who can fix your wandering heart. The Highland chief, who has this night avowed his love, at present fills your mind: who will next succeed him, time alone can tell."

Lady Elvira, offended and surprised, endeavoured to take away her hand, but Sidney grasped it still closer.

"Who are you," inquired her ladyship, "that thus presumes to detain me against

my will? I beg that you will immediately set me free."

"Remember the root-house on the banks of the lake," said the son of Lord Fortescue, resuming his natural voice: "remember your plighted faith, your promised love. Oh, Elvira, am I indeed forgotten!"

Lady Elvira trembled so violently that she was obliged to lean against Sidney for support: the consciousness of her own unworthiness held her silent. He had taken off his mask; and even the disguise he was in did not rob his expressive eyes and handsome features of their attraction: she saw in his countenance the reproaches his tongue had not yet uttered, and her heart died within her.

"You no longer love me," said he in a mournful accent; "no longer are you ready to unite your fate to mine: your heart deceived you, Elvira, and my happiness is at an end."

"Dear Sidney, how unjust you are! You know I would once gladly have become your wife, but now I dread your father's heavy resentment, and my uncle's

displeasure: even now I tremble, lest we should be seen."

"Lady Elvira," replied Sidney, while the blush of indignation flushed his cheek, "you are free; I absolve you from your vow. Vain are your attempts to conceal the fickleness of your mind, the inconstancy of your heart. Once you were the soul of my existence—the object of my first, my fondest attachment: you have yourself broken the spell that bound me so firmly to you. Farewell, Lady De Courci, I no longer brave a father's anger, a father's curse."

He turned proudly from her, and joined the lively assembly: disappointed love and wounded pride struggled hard in the bosom of Sidney. I will not leave the house, thought he; I will not allow her to suppose how much her conduct grieves me: no, I will stay, I will force my spirits, I will be all life, all soul, if my existence is the forfeit.

Sidney indeed never shone to greater advantage: he talked, laughed, sung, and the whole company were enchanted by the

wit and pleasantry of the man, whose heart was breaking all the while. At supper, when the company unmasked, the Duchess and her daughters were surprised to discover in the saucy gipsy-girl Sidney Fortescue; and Lady Lucy, who sat next him, rallied him most unmercifully upon his not staying until she returned.

“ Shall I tell your fortune now, lovely Lady Lucy ?” said he, taking her hand: “ it is not too late, I assure you.”

“ No, no,” cried she, laughing; “ the charm is broken now. Clement would not tell me what you said to her; but she declares you were a witch, you told so true.”

“ Indeed !” he replied, pressing her hand to his lips, and looking towards her sister, who shook her head at him, and smiled; while, as he caught a passing glimpse of Lady Elvira’s face, he saw that a gloom had overspread her heavenly features, and that Mr. Wrottesley was talking to her ladyship unnoticed. Disdainfully he turned away his head as she tried to fix his eye, and renewed his assiduities to the daughter of the Duchess, to whom he attached

himself the remainder of the evening; nor did he quit the Marchioness's until he had first seen the De Courci family depart. Then handing the Duchess and her daughters to their carriage, he leaped into his own, and returned late in the morning to Portland Place.

Robarts, who sat up for his young master, had got a cheering fire, and the coffee, ready to receive him. With affectionate anxiety he discovered that the languor which overspread the countenance of his favourite was more from inward vexation than fatigue. He helped to disrobe him of his gipsy garments, and saw him throw himself on the chair by the fire-side; while, as his head rested on his hand, he thought he perceived a tear steal down his cheek. With respectful fondness Robarts offered him some coffee, and inquired if he had not better go to bed.

Sidney, in taking the cup, cast his eyes upon his father's faithful domestic, whose open features plainly expressed the honest feelings of his heart. "Sit down, my good Robarts, I don't like to see you stand,"

said Sidney, kindly: "I am sorry to have kept you up so long: go to bed, Robarts, after you have taken something." Then looking at his watch—"It is now past five. Let me be called at twelve, and order four horses to be put to the carriage by one: I mean to sleep at the Abbey to-night."

Sidney then retired to his bed-chamber; but it was long before he could close his eyes in sleep. The image of Lady Elvira's faultless form presented itself to his imagination, and cheated him of repose: even in his slumbers he felt the wound her inconstancy had given him, and he rose feverish and unrefreshed. Robarts tried to persuade him to stay that day in town, as he was not expected; but Sidney now felt that the air of London affected him as much as it had before enlivened him. Ill in body, and still worse in mind, he arrived at the Abbey just as the family were sitting down to tea.

Cecil gave a scream of pleasure, and flew to his embrace, while all the family crowded round to make their various inquiries concerning the masquerade. His

pale and haggard look, however, soon silenced their curiosity, and he became the sole object of their attention. Completely exhausted by his own emotions, and the fatigue he had undergone, Sidney with difficulty assured them that he should be better after a good night's rest; and the Viscount, ringing for Mrs. Thomson, consigned his beloved son to her care and skill. With anxiety and affection Henry followed his brother to his apartments, but not to satisfy his curiosity. The countenance of Sidney, the expression of his eyes on encountering those of his brother, spoke all that was necessary to inform Henry that Lady Elvira was faithless.

Poor Sidney was going to enter into conversation, but his brother prevented him. "Let me see you in bed, my dear Sidney: I know that at present you are unfit for what you have to disclose. Try and compose yourself, my beloved brother: to-morrow we will converse freely; to-night think only of the love and tenderness of your family." He embraced him affec-

tionately; then rang for Mrs. Thomson, who was esteemed a capital nurse: she brought with her some saline draughts, and promised to sit up with him all night. Henry returned to the drawing-room, and relieved the fears of the Viscount and Cecil, while Julia, more alarmed than she dared venture to own, had completely spoilt the work which she had taken up to conceal her distress.

The next morning, Sidney, though far from well, yet determined, on account of his father's anxiety, to join the circle at the breakfast-table. He endeavoured to force his spirits, and succeeded for a short time; but the numerous questions of Mrs. Fortescue quite oppressed him, and Henry was obliged to remind her that his brother was not perfectly recovered.

"Dear me," cried she, laughing, "why who would ever suppose that a gay lively young man, like Sidney, would bear so ill the dissipations of a night's masquerade. For my part, I would have given any thing to have been there, and should have thought

nothing of a little languor and sickness after it. I never saw Sidney so completely cut up."

"My dear Lucinda," said the Viscount, "you think your constitution much stronger than it is. If you would be advised by me, you will relinquish all idea of returning to Town this winter, and stay at the Abbey until the next: you already look infinitely better for the regular life you have led since we have been here."

"Oh, my dear, dear uncle! if you do not wish me to hang myself upon one of those tall fir-trees, do not mention again such a terrible piece of advice. You know how I hate the country, except indeed the watering-places; and if I did not love Harry better than all the world, I should never have been able to pass nearly three weeks in the country at this season of the year; when, if I was in London, I should have enjoyed some fresh amusement every night."

Henry sighed deeply, and walked towards the window. Cecil followed him, and taking his arm, inquired if he would accompany her round the park. A tear

stood in his eye as he complied with her request. "You will not venture out, Lucinda, I am afraid," said her husband.

"No, thank you, my dear Harry: the weather is not inviting enough for me to be tempted from the fire-side. I have got into the middle of the last new novel, and I am quite mad to finish it."

"Will not you accompany us?" said Miss Fortescue to her friend, who had sat silent and pensive during breakfast. Julia declined, saying that she had letters to write home, but that perhaps she might join them, if she finished in time. Each now retired to their own apartments, except Sidney, who, throwing himself along the sofa, which was placed opposite the fire, tried to calm the violent palpitation of his heart by transient forgetfulness.

Vain was the attempt: his injured love, his wounded pride, and the beautiful cause of all his misery, still haunted his mind. Again he beheld in imagination her exquisite form, her large and languishing blue eyes, humid with tenderness, as, when sinking on his bosom in the root-house of

the lake, she had promised to unite her fate with his—to live for him alone. Softened by this picture of his fancy, his resentment lessened, his fondness revived. “ Oh !” cried he, starting up, and clasping his hands in an agony of affection, “ and art thou indeed lost to me for ever ! Am I no longer beloved ! Oh, Elvira ! still adored, still idolized, you have broken my heart !” He burst into tears, and sunk again on the couch.

A deep sigh from some one near him made Sidney raise his head, and he beheld Miss Aveland pale and almost fainting by the side of the sofa. She had finished her letters, and was going to join Henry and his sister, when, remembering that she had left her handkerchief in the breakfast-parlour, she went in search of it. Sidney’s exclamation had rivetted her to the spot, and his distress had nearly rendered her insensible.

The sound of his voice in accents of kindness restored her to recollection. Colouring deeply, she apologized for her unintentional intrusion, as she thought he

had retired to his own chamber. Sidney blushed also at having betrayed the secret of his soul: he pressed her hand respectfully to his lips: he saw her mild and compassionate eyes filled with tears of sympathy. Again he pressed it—gratitude sanctioned the liberty: then pitying her confusion, he gave her freedom, and sighed deeply, as she hastily quitted the apartment.

“Had but the amiable Julia been known to me before I had seen the faithless Elvira,” thought the son of the Viscount, “my heart would have acknowledged her modest merits—her modest beauties. I should not, as now, have been the victim of caprice and inconstancy: I should not, as now, lament the ruin of my fondest hopes, my dearest wishes. Ah, what do I say! One glance from that bewitching eye, one sigh from that luxurious bosom, would have rendered me unfaithful. Elvira is born to triumph over all her sex.”

On Henry’s return, he found his brother still musing in the breakfast-parlour, and no longer refused to hear the result of his journey. Pained, but not surprised, Henry

again reminded him that he ought to feel grateful for the intervention of Providence, which, by sending him to his rescue, prevented his being united for life to so faithless a woman. Sidney, however, could not be persuaded to think as his brother on this subject, but continued to regret in the strongest terms that they had not succeeded in their intended elopement; and concluded by saying that he should ever consider Henry's interference as the cause of all his misery.

“ You think so now, my dear Sidney; but you will one day be convinced that the failure of your plan was the salvation of all that is dear to you. Lady Elvira has not deceived me: my opinion of her character was formed by her boldness of seeking our acquaintance—her readiness to listen to your passion; and I judged of her own morality and duty, by the light manner in which she treated your disobedience and broken promise to my father. Had she loved you sincerely, Sidney, she would never have encouraged you in an act which must one day or other have rendered you

miserable. She would have listened to the advice of her sister: she would have sacrificed her own inclinations and affections to secure you from the just resentment of an offended parent. Believe me, my dear Sidney, that the woman who holds lightly the sacred duties of a daughter will never suffer those of a wife to interfere with her pleasures or her wishes. Weary of the solitude of the Castle, our arrival held forth a possibility of varying the sameness of the scene. Bold and adventurous, Lady Elvira determined to meet us more than half way; for she actually compelled us either to break through the commands of the Viscount, or to act with unbecoming rudeness. The novelty of your secret interviews, while they alarmed the delicacy of Lady Angeline, served only to heighten the desires of her sister. She would have acted the same, my brother, had you been less amiable, less attractive. As it was, she most probably became as much attached as her wandering nature would permit; but let her conduct since her introduction into life, since she has discovered the power of her

charms, speak for the strength, constancy, and tenderness of that affection she professed. My brother! my beloved brother! these tears are too precious to be shed for the inconstant, the faithless Elvira. Lady Angeline's virtues would indeed deserve them all."

"I fear that you are right," replied Sidney, dashing off his tears. "Had Elvira really loved me, absence would have strengthened, not weakened her affection. I could excuse her being fond of admiration, but that would not have prompted her to treat with chilling indifference a man devotedly attached to her, and ready to hazard every thing that was dear to him for her sake. Alas! that I should have risked so much for one so wholly undeserving. Sure she possesses the fatal treachery of her father; and hatred, not love, was the impulse that directed her actions. No matter what, since I am the devoted victim of her falsehood."

Henry was too well convinced that time alone could subdue the poignancy of the disappointment his brother had received;

he therefore forbore to annoy him with fruitless advice, trusting that Lady Elvira herself would more easily dissolve the spell by which she had fascinated the senses of Sidney.

At dinner, the Viscount carefully examined the separate faces of his family: not even Mrs. Fortescue's was gay. She had been reading a fashionable novel, and panted to mingle among the lively scenes it described. With the deepest concern he beheld the altered looks of his eldest son: he doubted not for an instant but that love was the source of his unhappiness; and he judged from the past, that the object of it must have been introduced to his notice while at the Abbey. "If," thought the Viscount, "my son has become enslaved by the lovely resemblance of Lady Emma, how severe is the trial of his duty that awaits him. Unhappy son of an unhappy father! time, which softens the keenness of common sorrows, will only add to thine!"

In the sweet intercourse of tender friendship, Cecil had informed her friend of the meaning of Sidney's passionate exclama-

tions. The kind-hearted girl had wept over the description of his sufferings, and artlessly discovered the real state of her own mind in her just condemnation of the fickle Lady Elvira: the blush, also, which tinged her cheek when placed next to Sidney, betrayed to all but the unhappy lover the attachment of Julia Aveland; and Cecil, who truly loved her, put up her innocent prayers to the throne of mercy for the recovery of her brother's repose, and the accomplishment of her own wishes: she only regretted that the time would soon arrive for their quitting the Abbey, and that then Miss Aveland must return to her paternal abode.

Sidney, abandoned by the woman of his first and fondest affection, a prey to secret anguish, and secret wretchedness, began to find some relief to his agitated mind in the conversation and endearing sympathy of this amiable girl: the secret of his heart was made known to her: her eyes, her features, her voice, told him how truly she commiserated his sufferings; how willingly

she sought to relieve them. This conviction insensibly rendered him desirous of shewing his gratitude, by a variety of little trifles which a common observer would not have noticed, but which were seen and felt by Miss Aveland. She became more than ever his companion; and at length he felt uncomfortable if by chance she walked with any one but himself; and expressed more than once his regret at the idea of losing so interesting a young friend.

Mrs. Fortescue could neither think nor talk of any thing but the balls and parties she meant to give on her return to Town.

The Viscount wished them to reside in Portland Place: and as he allowed her to make what alterations she pleased, and to order in whatever she might think requisite, she willingly consented.

“As we promised to return you, my dear Julia,” said she to Miss Aveland, “upon our quitting the Abbey, we must, unfortunately, perform this disagreeable task. I shall, however, do all I can to persuade the General and your good mother to

spare you to us this winter. I shall not think of returning again to the Abbey until after the fourth of June."

The fine hazel eyes of Julia Aveland expressed her thanks, while those of Sidney evinced equal pleasure. "And I shall join my entreaties likewise," said Lord Fortescue, "with your's, my dear Lucinda, for I cannot consent to lose my little favourite so soon, though I fear she has passed but a dull time at the Abbey: indeed, we are indebted to her for all the amusement we have received. How is it, my dear niece, that you have not once attempted to charm us by your musical talents? I thought you were partial to that delightful science. Henry, as well as myself, would have been much gratified to hear you."

Mrs. Fortescue coloured. "You shall hear me frequently when we are in Town: but you know, my dear uncle, that I am always low-spirited in the country."

"I grieve, my dear Lucinda," replied the Viscount, "to perceive that all your pleasures, all your happiness depend on a Town life: for my own part, if I were not

compelled occasionally to reside in London, I should never feel a wish to enter it."

"But, my dear uncle, you will allow that there is some difference between you and I. Surely it is very natural in a young woman of my age to find pleasure in the gay amusements of Town. You, perhaps, have been surfeited with its enjoyments."

"No," replied the Viscount, casting a look towards his youngest son: "my pleasures, Lucinda, were of a higher order than those which attract so much of your attention. Mine were enjoyments which never cloy; and yet you know I seldom went to London."

"True," said his niece: "but what those pleasures were I never could find out."

"I am sorry," replied his lordship in a tone of regret, "that your own heart, my dear Lucinda, did not point out to you the source of all my comforts. It was the endearments of domestic happiness, the smiles and innocent prattle of my children, the society of a few friends, whose minds accorded with my own, and the luxury of a choice and well-selected library, that af-

forded me those permanent enjoyments that never tire."

He left the room when he had finished speaking, convinced, when too late, that his niece was not the woman calculated to make happy such a heart and mind as his beloved Henry's.

Mrs. Fortescue sat for a moment silent and abashed by the reproof of her uncle. All but her husband had quitted the apartment, to get ready for a walk. She cast her eyes towards the window where he was standing, and heard him sigh deeply. "Henry," said she, while the tears filled her eyes, "are you offended with me also?" He turned hastily, and seeing her distress, instantly threw his arms around her, and kissed away the falling tear.

"My dearest Lucinda, my father is not angry with you; he is only sorry to see that the presence of even those you love best cannot make amends for the diversions of Town. Believe me, my love, that a woman never shines to such advantage as when she is fulfilling the duties of a wife and mother — duties which a dissipated

woman of fashion is a stranger to. Besides, you are naturally very delicate, and by no means calculated to bear the fatigue of a constant life of what you call pleasure."

Again he pressed her to his bosom; while she, affected by his tenderness more than the reproof of his father, promised to be all he wished: and as an earnest of her good intentions, dedicated all that morning to practising some of his favourite airs, which he staid at home on purpose to select for her performance; rejoicing that, at least, she possessed an affectionate and pliant disposition, and hoping that her love for gaiety would in time yield to her love for himself.

Lord Fortescue was agreeably surprised in the evening by his niece inquiring if she should play to him; telling him at the same time how she had spent her morning. Pleased at her readiness to oblige him, he affectionately kissed her cheek, and forgot the disagreeable impression her conduct had made on his mind. As they were all musical, the Viscount was gratified by a family concert. Mrs. Fortescue had no voice; but Julia and Cecil sung sweetly.

The former timidly asked Sidney to accompany her in a duet; and to the astonishment of them all, he immediately consented without any hesitation.

It was the first time that Sidney had testified any inclination to join in the amusement of their little circle; and his father accepted it as a favourable omen. Delicacy prevented his noticing to his son the change which had taken place in his looks and manners, convinced that neither advice nor reproof would in this case be of service to Sidney, whose very dejection the Viscount considered as a proof of his inward self-reproaches. Pity and tenderness were the sentiments that filled the bosom of Lord Fortescue, and rendered his conduct towards his son more than usually affectionate. Most sincerely did he hope that time, which brings to pass many strange, and almost improbable things, would ultimately render the amiable Julia Aveland the object of Sidney's future affection.

The warm and enthusiastic spirit of Sidney was called into action by the generous forbearance of his father. He felt the deli-

cacy of his behaviour, and determined not to be wholly unworthy such a parent.—“ I will banish from my heart this fatal passion,” thought the enamoured son of the Viscount: “ I will conquer my shameful infatuation. Elvira, beloved, adored, once idolized, I will break from the magic of thy powerful charms. Too long have I weakly suffered myself to mourn over thy infidelity: too long have I permitted every faculty of my mind, every affection of my soul, to be absorbed by thy image. Henceforward, the duties of a son, a brother, shall occupy my thoughts; and my dear father yet shall see that all his good advice, his excellent examples, and his tenderness, are not lavished on an ingrate.

During their stay at the Abbey, Mrs. Fortescue continued to delight them by a display of her musical talents, and her willingness to enter into any proposed diversion to enliven the winter evenings: her husband therefore began to cherish the fond hope of being able in time to wean her from those follies which had so long constituted her chief felicity, and to which at present

she was but too strongly attached. Sidney's handsome features once more assumed an air of cheerfulness which enraptured his father, and gave hope and pleasure to Henry and his sister. They saw with heartfelt satisfaction, that on the approach of Julia, or at the sound of her friendly voice, the pensiveness of his countenance gave place to a smile of approbation. "Lady Elvira's power is decreasing," said Cecil exultingly: "soon will that cruel woman cease to rob our beloved Sidney of repose. Oh! my Henry, already has our tenderness wrought a change in our dear brother; and Julia will be victorious at last.

CHAPTER III.

WHILE the vanity of Lady Elvira was gratified by the universal homage paid to her beauty, her heart secretly reproached her for her desertion of her first lover. She had expected that he would leave the masquerade, upon the discovery of her altered sentiments; and her pride was mortified by seeing him, on the contrary, not only remain, but enchant every body by his vivacity and wit. The alteration in her countenance was observed by young Wrottesley. He followed anxiously the direction of her eyes, and saw them fixed on Lord Fortescue's son, with an expression which gave alarm to his tenderness. He applied to the Duchess of Aimhigh for information on this subject: but her Grace, who had determined to bring about a match between them, positively assured him that the heart

of that beautiful girl was disengaged. She, however, advised him to push forward his claims, and secure the prize as early as possible, promising to use all her interest to facilitate his wishes. The Duchess was as good as her word: she repeatedly called on Lord De Courci, took every opportunity of sounding forth the praises of Everard Wrottesley, made parties expressly to throw them into each other's company, and uniformly placed them together at her supper-tables.

The Honourable Mr. Wrottesley was not a young man to constantly associate with, without being pleased by his conversation, and gratified by his attentions. He was the magnet of the day, and Lady Elvira exultingly perceived that the decided preference he paid her to other handsome girls rendered her the object of their united envy. Had she consulted her inclinations, they would have directed her choice to a different object; but the desire of securing to herself a man so eminently sought after, and of being able (through his large fortune, and the great interest of his family) to live in the highest style of fashionable luxury,

determined her to sacrifice to wealth, vanity, and show, the tenderest feelings of her heart.

The Earl of Dorrington was pleased with the object of his son's choice, and advised him to apply immediately to her uncle. Young Wrottesley accordingly made his proposals in form, which were accepted by Lord De Courci, and he was received as the acknowledged lover of his beautiful niece. Eager to make "assurance doubly sure," Everard was anxious to hasten his nuptials, and begged that an early day might be named to crown his felicity.

To this, Lord De Courci started no objection. Disappointed in the hope of securing Lady Elvira in his own family, his lordship became desirous to see her united to Mr. Wrottesley, for whom he entertained a sincere regard, and expressed his wishes to his niece in the strongest manner. All the family, except Lady Angeline, united in favour of Everard's petition: she maintained a steady silence, which appeared rather singular, as her affection for her sister was well known.

“What is the reason,” inquired the Earl, “that my little Angeline is so reserved in giving her opinion upon her sister’s approaching nuptials? I am afraid that Everard is not so great a favourite as I could wish; for I have noticed that your voice, my dear girl, has never been heard in his interest.”

“If I have been silent, my dear uncle,” replied Lady Angeline, “on a subject of so much importance, it was not because I doubted of Mr. Wrottesley’s merits, but because I am an enemy to all these hasty matches, made up before either party can have had time to be acquainted with each other’s tastes or dispositions.”

“Oh! then you are afraid, it seems, that Elvira may repent when too late, should she marry young Wrottesley as early as I have proposed?”

Her ladyship coloured, but was silent. Lady Dorothea, rising, tenderly embraced her, saying—“The precepts of our worthy Mrs. Selby have not been lost upon you, my beloved Angeline. In this case, however, I think there is nothing to fear.

Mr. Wrottesley seems one of the most amiable of men: your sister has sense enough to perceive it; and as her heart was perfectly free before she saw him, I see no obstacle to their union. I vote for it, perhaps, from selfish motives, as I am anxious to return to the Castle, and yet should be more happy were I to see my dear girl settled before I take my last leave of London."

The idea of parting from this kind and tender friend, who had been a mother to her, filled the eyes of Lady Angeline with tears, while her sister, assuming an air of liveliness at that moment foreign to her heart, said, as she kissed her—"My dear aunt, to oblige you I will consent to hasten my marriage: it is also not very improbable that we may spend a month with you at the Castle this summer: perhaps my uncle may be induced to make a family party, and accompany us."

"Heavens!" thought her sister, "can Elvira be in her senses! Can she abandon Sidney for another, and then propose to visit a place where every object must remind her

of her own faithlessness. With attention she listened to the answer of her uncle.

“ I should be happy to oblige you, Elvira,” replied Lord De Courci, “ but it is many years since my family quitted the Castle, with a determination never again to make it their residence. Your proposed visit, and a recent unhappy circumstance, may, however, have some influence over my conduct. Could I persuade Lady Desmond to join in the party, I might be tempted to break my resolution, and once more enter the walls of De Courci Castle.”

Lady Desmond turned pale : a trembling agitated every limb, yet she answered with her usual sweetness, that whatever might be her secret feelings upon revisiting the ancient castle of her ancestors, she would sacrifice them if necessary to the wishes of her brother. “ But surely, my dear Reginald, you will not wholly abandon Dudley House this summer. I was in hopes that you would have returned to it earlier this year than usual. Suppose we make a cheerful party, and go down to it this spring.”

Lord De Courci now became agitated. "I do not mean to go there this year," said he in a faltering voice. "Once it was my favourite residence; but now I feel a dislike, a repugnance to the idea of returning to it."

Lady Desmond took his hand, and affectionately kissed it. "Dearest brother, might I but plead for a sincere penitent—" Angrily he snatched away his hand. "Emma, as you love me, never again touch upon this subject." Then hastily quitting the apartment, he left his sister and the sympathising Angeline in despair for Lord Reginald.

Lord De Courci had in fact received several letters from his son, but he returned them all unopened: even while his heart melted with parental affection, he resolutely forbore to break the seal of any of them; and Lord Reginald had the severe mortification to find that all overtures on his part were received with disdain. The unremitted kindness of Lord Desmond and Lady Angeline yet helped to support his spirits: the former faithfully kept his pro-

mise of writing constantly, and the latter became the affectionate correspondent of his wife; while Lady Elvira, too much taken up by her own beauty, and the admiration it procured her, seldom found time to send them any thing more than a postscript in her sister's letters, and not that always.

The redoubled affection of his Mary, the kind attention of her mother, who now began to lament that she had involved so amiable a man in the heavy displeasure of his father, contributed to sooth the wounded mind of Lord Reginald: he trusted that the Earl would return to Dudley House, and that he would then pardon this first act of disobedience.

Lady Angeline felt so completely distressed at the strange fickleness of her sister, that it added considerably to the pensiveness of her disposition. She had purposely avoided mentioning Sidney Fortescue's name since her last conversation with Lady Elvira, nor did she even question her as to the cause of her sudden depression of spirits on the night of the mas-

querade, although she had been surprised to find that the gipséy who had taken up so much of Lady Lucy's time and thoughts was Sidney; and still more to perceive that all his attentions were directed to her ladyship, instead of his watching the movements of her sister. The Duchess's daughter had told her of his being left with Lady Elvira in the unoccupied chamber, but she was wholly ignorant of what had passed between them. She hoped, nevertheless, that Sidney was not so deeply attached to her sister as she had ever supposed him to be, since it was but too evident that the ruin of all his hopes was now decided upon, and that cold indifference, and cutting neglect, were the only rewards he would receive from the woman, who, but a little while back, was ready and willing to abandon every thing to become his wife.

Generously interested in the fate of Lord Fortescue's son, Lady Angeline beheld with secret dread the splendid preparations for her sister's nuptials. Lady Elvira's ever-lively features exhibited no trait of

reluctance to the match, but the delicate and tender heart of her sister trembled with apprehension, lest by this hasty marriage she not only put the seal to her own misery, but involved in ruin the future happiness of a deserving and estimable man.

Lady Elvira, with all her levity and inconstancy, was much attached to her sister, and felt uneasy and uncomfortable that they no longer conversed in their usual free and unreserved manner; yet she studiously avoided mentioning Sidney, conscious that Lady Angeline would never countenance her infidelity. She, however, took the opportunity of their being alone one morning to try and draw her from her taciturnity.

“Dearest Angeline,” said her ladyship, “you have looked so dull of late that Everard seriously asked me the other day if I knew the happy man who had gained your affections, for he could only attribute your pensiveness to love. He says that Herbert is always talking about you, and thinks you one of the best little creatures in the world. But the attentions of Desmond, who somehow or other contrives to be constantly at

your side, prevents his declaring to you his admiration. Really, Angeline, I begin myself to think that Robert is not altogether indifferent to you."

"Indifferent!" replied her sister: "they must know very little of my cousin who could suppose for a moment that he could be looked on with indifference either by a relation or a friend."

"Well, well: that is all very true; but I meant that Robert attaches himself so closely to you, that if you are not in love with each other, every body supposes you are. You may depend upon it, Angeline, that you will never get a lover to declare himself, while you continue to take so much notice of my cousin."

"That is the most fortunate thing in the world for me," cried Lady Angeline; "and I am under great obligations to Robert for making me his companion, and thereby saving me from being persecuted by the attentions of men for whom I do not even feel interested."

"What a strange girl you are! And you seriously wish to make me believe that you

are perfectly indifferent to the delightful attentions of a lover? Come, come, be honest, Angeline: confess, have you never yet seen the man whom you would like well enough for a husband?"

Lady Angeline blushed; she felt that she had seen one, and only one, whom she could love dearly, and for whose sake she would joyfully have relinquished her rank in life, and become, if it were possible, even the humble tenant of a cottage. But this was known only to herself: her sister in particular was now the last person she could trust with the secret: she therefore tried to parry off the question by saying, "Have you seen one, Elvira, that you think would suit my disposition and taste? You know I am an oddity, and it is only an oddity, as you call it, that will suit me for a husband."

Lady Elvira laughed. "Let me recollect," said she: "there is Herbert Wrottesley, who I am certain is desperately in love with you. What have you to say against him?"

"Nothing," replied her sister; "I think

him a very good young man; and, as a brother-in-law, I shall always esteem him; but not in any other light."

"Poor Herbert!" exclaimed Lady Elvira; "he then is destined to wear the willow. I was in hopes that we should soon have seen you Lady Herbert Wrottesley. Perhaps you prefer being Marchioness of Arlington. You have only to smile on the young marquis, and he is your's."

"Rest satisfied, my dear Elvira, that I shall not do any such thing. It is very probable that I may remain single; for I assure you that I shall never marry, unless I am convinced that the temper, taste, principles, and habits of life, of my lover, are in perfect unison with my own."

"Since we are talking of matrimony," replied Lady Elvira, "tell me, Angeline, don't you think I shall have a good chance of being very happy with Everard? He is a mild, goodnatured creature; and I dare say will never oppose any of my pleasures."

"I think you have, if that is necessary

to secure your happiness," said Lady Angeline. "Mr. Wrottesley appears of the most yielding disposition; and as you, of course, will be more domestic after your marriage, you will, I hope, agree very well together. But you forget, my dear Elvira, that you have asked my opinion rather late, considering that the day is fixed for your nuptials. I hope your mind is not undecided as to the real state of your heart."

Lady Elvira coloured at the reproach these words conveyed. "I wish, Angeline, you would accompany me to the Duchess of Aimhigh's. I want to see Lady Clementina." In saying this, she unconsciously took out of her sister's hand the volume of Petrarch, which had once belonged to Henry Fortescue, and in which had been conveyed to her the tender little note of his brother. Her colour deepened.

"What is the matter, Elvira? What do you see there? You look so confused!" said Lady Angeline, taking the loved book

from her sister, and locking it up in her cabinet.

“ You are grown quite illnatured, Angeline,” replied her sister, bursting into tears, “ since we unfortunately got acquainted with the sons of the Viscount. I declare that I verily believe you will never love me again.”

“ Dearest Elvira,” cried Lady Angeline, throwing her white arms round the neck of the beautiful inconstant, “ I confess that I feel so much for poor Sidney, that it may have influenced my conduct towards you : it certainly has made me shun being alone with you. I hope in God, my beloved sister, that you have not deceived yourself a second time. I trust that you will be happy with Everard : amiable as he is, he cannot love you dearer than Sidney once did.”

“ *Once did !*” repeated Lady Elvira in a low voice : then embracing her sister, she said, “ I cannot now recede, Angeline, even if I wished it : all is fixed for my nuptials : no dread of a parent’s curse, an

uncle's anger, disturb the brightness of my prospects. I wish, however, never to hear Sidney's name mentioned again: it was a foolish affair altogether; and I dare say he considers it in that light." She did not, however, tell her sister that Sidney was not become so indifferent to her as he ought to be, consistently with her present engagements.

Lady Angeline felt it was improper to bring up the name of Sidney; but she naturally concluded, from the conduct of her sister, that she could hear it with perfect indifference, or at least with no other sentiment than self-reproach.

"Promise me," said Lady Elvira, "that you will behave, Angeline, as usual: if any thing could affect my spirits, it would be your reserve."

"Had I loved you less," replied her sister, "I should not have acted as I have done; but I am ready, my dear Elvira, to attend you to the Duchess's." Then ordering their carriage, they descended into the drawing-room, where they found the Earl and Lord Desmond reading the

papers. The latter inquired if he should escort them to where they were going.

“Why, really, Robert,” said Lady Elvira, “if you can live a few hours without Angeline, I think you might as well stay at home; but if you cannot, why then I suppose we must take pity upon you. But, uncle, now only put down the paper one instant; I want to ask you something: may I, Angeline?”

“Certainly; you have my free permission,” replied her sister.

“Well then, my dear uncle, is it right that Robert should wholly monopolize Angeline, to the great annoyance of Herbert Wrottesley and a dozen others, unless they mean to take each other for better or worse? I have been rallying my sister upon it, but she only says that she is very much obliged to him for doing so. We shall have another wedding soon, uncle: shall we not?”

Lord De Courci smilingly replied, “It looks a little suspicious, I confess. Oh! Angeline. Robert, is it so?”

Her ladyship took the arm of her cousin.

“ You may laugh, uncle, and Elvira may look as wise as she pleases ; but Robert and I have agreed to be each other’s companions until we meet with those we may like better.”

She then ran down stairs, followed by her sister and cousin, and in a few minutes they were set down at the Duchess of Aimhigh’s.

“ We were just talking of you, my dear girls,” said her Grace. “ Clementina has had a letter from her friend Mrs. Henry Fortescue, which informs her that in another fortnight she will be in Town for the remainder of the winter. I must introduce you to her ; she is one of the gayest, best-tempered young women I know, and such a one for a dance, she can keep it up with the best of you until six in the morning. Oh ! we shall have such parties, such balls, Elvira ! I assure you Lucinda Fortescue is quite the dashing woman of fashion. You must not stay longer than a week at Dorrington Park.”

“ I can hardly spare you for that time,” said Lady Clementina ; “ and so I mean to

tell Wrottesley. Does Angeline accompany you?"

"I believe not," replied Lady Elvira. "My aunt Archdale returns to De Courci Castle immediately after my marriage, and my sister does not wish to leave her during her stay in Town."

"Yes, yes; we understand you," cried the Duchess. "Wrottesley must think much of having you a whole week to himself. I promise him he will not have such another seven days' felicity all this season. I mean to be very gay; and Mrs. Fortescue, I am certain, will keep pace with me."

"Unfortunately," said Lady Elvira, "there exists some cause of animosity between her family and mine, which will prevent our visiting."

"That is, indeed, unlucky," replied her Grace. "I must see what is to be done for you young people. The Viscount, although a most charming man, is such a recluse, that I can never get sight of him to have a little chat: but I mean to try first the state of your uncle's mind. I remember many years back a report then

current—but bless me, it is quite unchristian-like to bear malice now. I gave your cousin as a partner to Miss Fortescue, on purpose to bring about a reconciliation. Apropos!—My lord, what do you think of her?”

“I can have but one opinion,” said Lord Desmond, colouring as he spoke, “and that I know is the same as your Grace’s.”

“You think her a fine girl then. Is she conversible? for her father has not suffered her to mix much in life.”

“She is a very sweet girl,” replied his lordship, “and discovers a highly cultivated and elegant mind.”

“So, so,” cried her Grace. “I verily believe, Desmond, that you would have no objection, were it possible that I could bring about a re-union of the families.”

“Oh! no,” said his lordship, with enthusiastic warmth: “should your Grace succeed, you will eternally oblige us all.”

“Speak for yourself, Robert,” cried Lady Elvira, laughingly. Her Grace gave her a significant look, saying, “Well, well, I will try what I can do to oblige your

lordship: but while I am procuring you all partners for life, pray what is to become of my little Sylph, my pretty Angeline?"

Her ladyship just at that moment returned from the chamber of Lady Lucy. "Thank your Grace very kindly," she replied, with the sweetest vivacity. "Little Angeline wishes to remain as she is; and though in less weighty matters she will with gratitude take your Grace's advice, yet in this one instance the Sylph must choose for herself."

"Upon my troth, you are a bonny lass," said the goodnatured Duchess, "and shall have your own way a bit. I really thought you and Desmond meant to make a match of it. Arlington has still some hope of securing your favour: he is a very good young man, and a marquis: I think your ladyship could not better yourself."

Lady Angeline only smiled at this hint of the Duchess. Her sister had finished her conversation with Lady Clementina, and they therefore rose to take leave.

"Trust to me, Desmond," said her Grace, shaking him cordially by the hand,

“ I will see what I can do for you. We all dine at your uncle’s on Elvira’s wedding-day, and I will seek an opportunity of sounding his mind. Upon my troth, I cannot bear to think that you young folks should be forbidden to speak to each other.”

As they returned home, Lord Desmond expatiated on the goodnature of the Duchess. “ She is a remarkably pleasant woman,” said he, “ and possesses I believe one of the most friendly hearts in the world. It is impossible to be dull in her company. She is the life and soul of whatever society she enters; and may be truly termed one of the most witty and fascinating women of the age.”

“ Only a little too fond of match-making,” replied Lady Angeline. His lordship smiled. “ Elvira does not think so I am certain,” said he.

“ No, indeed!” exclaimed her ladyship. “ I think we young girls are infinitely obliged to her Grace. She has brought more people together than any woman of the present day; and has done, I believe, more genuine acts of benevolence than

will ever be made public. I have serious doubts, however, that her kindness will be thrown away in this instance; for if my uncle were inclined to yield, the Viscount I am confident will never break his oath."

Her cousin looked surprised. "What oath do you mean, Elvira?" She blushed deeply. Fortunately for her ladyship the stopping of the carriage rendered a reply unnecessary.

Lord Desmond was, however, too much interested on the subject to remain in ignorance; he therefore sought an opportunity of speaking in private with his mother, and related to her the goodnatured intention of the Duchess. The varying colour of his mother's still beautiful countenance was observed by him with anxious solicitude.

"Vain, my beloved son," she cried, "will be the kind efforts of her Grace. Lord Fortescue will never listen to any proposal of reconciliation with our family. Deep and deadly is his hatred towards it." Her tears fell fast; she tried to repress them.

Lord Desmond trembled violently ; he pressed her hand with filial fondness to his bosom, but she had damped the rising hope that a moment before had animated it.

“ Go and call Angeline,” said his mother : “ that sweet girl shares with you, my Robert, all the dearest affections of my soul. Oh, my son, she is just the woman I could wish to see you attached to, for she is as perfect as poor human nature can be.”

So thought Lord Desmond ; yet Lady Angeline was only to him as a beloved sister. When this amiable girl obeyed the summons of her aunt, she tenderly inquired if she was unwell.

“ No, my dear Angeline : I am only a little disturbed by the communication of Robert, respecting the Duchess of Aimhigh’s intention of endeavouring to reunite the families of Fortescue and De Courci. What did your sister mean by the oath of the Viscount ? Tell me, my love. How came she acquainted with the fatal secret which for ever separates the two houses ?”

Lady Angeline turned as pale as death, and with difficulty kept herself from fainting.

“Tell me, my beloved girl,” repeated Lady Desmond, taking her cold hand in her’s, and kissing her cheek, while her cousin hung over her with the salts, equally anxious to hear her speak. “Your emotion, your confusion, my dear Angeline, betrays that you are informed of all concerning that dreadful separation. Speak, my darling. How came you by the knowledge?”

“Oh! my beloved aunt,” at length exclaimed her niece, falling at her feet, “I would refuse you nothing, but I dare not reply to your question: if, indeed, it only involved myself—”

“Oh!” cried Lady Desmond, “you have excited all my fears. Rise, dearest Angeline,” said she, embracing her tenderly. “I must question Elvira.”

“Dear aunt, do not be angry with her: pray do not tell my uncle, or any person living, of our imprudence.”

“Robert,” said Lady Desmond, “go and fetch your cousin. This must be fully

explained. Do not tremble, Angeline. If any wrong has been committed, it is Elvira's fault."

Lady Elvira now entered with a face dimpled with smiles. The pale and death-like appearance of her sister, the agitated looks of her aunt, alarmed her.

"Tell me, Elvira," said the latter, "by what means you became acquainted with the cause of that unfortunate animosity which for ever prevents a child of the house of Fortescue from being united to one of your's."

Lady Elvira instantly recovered her vivacity. "Is that all, my dear aunt. I should have supposed by the death-like appearance of my sister, by the long face of my cousin, and your solemnity, my dear aunt, that something very dreadful had happened."

"Be serious, Elvira, and answer my question. I appealed first to your sister; but I rather imagine that delicacy held her silent. I expect, Elvira, that you truly relate what you know of that fatal affair."

Her ladyship, without being much embarrassed, repeated her desire to learn the reason of the desertion of the two old family seats, and her curiosity to gain all the information she could respecting them. She acknowledged her visits to the Abbey, and coloured as she was compelled to confess her private interviews with the sons of the Viscount. She, however, artfully concealed her intended elopement, and managed her story so well, that Lady Desmond had no suspicion of any attachment between them. As she was going to repeat the words of the Viscount to his sons on the lake, her sister gave her a look, which was observed by her aunt, who instantly imagined that it related to herself. "Go on," said she. "I am prepared to hear the painful indignation of Lord Fortescue. My dear son has yet to learn the sorrows of his mother; but he will only have to weep for her sufferings, not her crimes."

Lady Elvira continued, while the deep sighs of her aunt affected her son and youngest niece: the tears of the latter fell

rapidly on the hand of Lady Desmond, who repeatedly pressed her to her bosom. "My Angeline," said she, when Lady Elvira had finished, "I rejoice that your sister has generously exculpated you from all censure in this thoughtless affair, and taken it wholly upon herself."

She held out her hand to her eldest niece, who kissed it affectionately, while the young lord, as he sat on the couch by his mother, covered his face to hide his agitation.

"My dear Elvira," said her aunt, "is, I am certain, perfectly convinced of the rash and giddy step she has taken. I will not reprove you, my dear niece. In less than a fortnight you will be united to a worthy young man, and let the imprudence of your conduct be buried in oblivion. It is well for yourself that you did not become attached to Sidney Fortescue, for hopeless would have been your affection. The Viscount sacrificed his own happiness and mine to the manes of his sister, and all hope would be vain of weakening his resentment, My son, my beloved Robert,

may you never feel the bitter pangs of disappointed love!—never by sad experience may you be taught the heart-rending sorrows of your mother!”

Lord Desmond pressed her hand to his lips : she felt it moistened with his tears. “ Another time, my dear children, I will more fully explain all I have suffered. In justice to my departed brother, I must add, that the consciousness of having ruined my peace by his imprudence embittered all his domestic hours ; and could the forfeit of his life have restored me to that felicity once within my grasp, I am certain he would willingly have paid it.”

She then embraced her nieces and her son, who quitted her to dress for dinner.

The Earl of Dorrington and his family were expected ; and Lady Elvira, as she contemplated her lovely features in the mirror of her dressing-room, forgot the vexatious conversation of the morning. With a face animated by the consciousness of superior beauty, she hastened into the drawing-room, where the family were all assembled. Lord Dorrington rose, and

taking her hand, presented her to his only daughter, who, with her husband, the Honourable Colonel Fitzwilliam, had come expressly to Town for the purpose of being introduced to their future sister-in-law.

Lady Anna Fitzwilliam was a pattern of conjugal affection. The approving smiles of her husband, who lived but for her, constituted her whole earthly felicity. She tenderly embraced the object of her brother's adoration : her eyes mildly ran over the faultless form and exquisite features of Lady Elvira ; but she shrunk from the gaze of her large blue eyes, and turned with indescribable pleasure and relief from her superior attractions to the tender, modest, blushing Lady Angeline, while Everard Wrottesley hung over her beautiful sister, and scarcely seemed sensible to any thing but her.

Lady Anna could not avoid whispering to her brother Herbert her admiration of the youngest niece of Lord De Courci. " I already love her," said her ladyship, " and long to be more intimately acquainted with her."

“ I can assure you,” he replied, “ that your love will increase: she is the most amiable little creature in the world; and the man who is destined to gain her heart will possess a treasure that is invaluable.”

“ Suppose, my dear Herbert, you try to be that happy man.”

“ She is so perfect,” said he, sighing deeply, “ that I have neither courage nor presumption to attempt it. At present her cousin appears to engross all her attention, and I must continue to adore in silence.”

Lady Angeline, unconscious of being the object of their notice, was sitting pensively on a couch, by the side of Lord Desmond. Each were occupied by the conversation of the morning: a deep sigh from her companion made her look up. All were busy in the chit-chat of the day; and Lady Angeline, directing her eyes towards her cousin, tenderly inquired if he was unwell.

“ No, my dear cousin,” said he, pressing her hand: “ I was only lamenting the unhappy difference which still exists between our family and that of the lovely

Cecil Fortescue." He coloured as the name escaped his lips; but the sweet eyes of Lady Angeline encouraged him to continue. "Should the Duchess but succeed," and his countenance brightened as he spoke, "oh! what delight it will be to speak, to associate with that sweet girl! will it not, Angeline?"

"It will, indeed," replied his cousin. "I long to tell her how much I love her: but, alas! I fear that I shall never have that happiness."

From that moment the two cousins became, even more than ever, inseparable companions.

Lord Desmond, whose youthful heart had yielded to the enchanting sweetness and lovely person of Miss Fortescue, sought every opportunity of conversing with Lady Angeline: in her he found the tender and sympathizing friend, ever ready, not only to listen with attention, but to join with him in his praises of Cecil, and in his prayers that the two families might one day be reconciled. She was warm in her eulogiums of Sidney; but having once given her cou-

sin an idea of Henry's virtues and filial piety, she was silent ever after, unless his name was first mentioned by Lord Desmond. She could not, however, avoid noticing to herself the singularity of that secret feeling which still seemed to attach her family to that of the Viscount's: and something seemed also to assure her that the sweet daughter of her enemy would not, any more than her brother Sidney, adopt the resentful sentiments of her father.

As the time rapidly approached which was to unite her sister to Everard Wrottesley, the natural thoughtlessness of her highly expressive features become more discernible, from the contrast of the ever lively smiling face of Lady Elvira.

The latter anticipated with delight the joyful moment when she should become her own mistress, and vie even with the Duchess in the luxury and splendor of her household, not considering for a moment that by this rash and hasty step she was annihilating every hope of Sidney—the man she once professed to love, once vowed eternal fidelity to. She also knew that on

the day of her marriage she was to bid, perhaps, a last adieu to the old and steady friend of her youth, whose affection alone had brought her to London, and whose delicate health and advanced age rendered it not altogether improbable she might never more behold her. Careless alike of the past and the future, she thought only of her present bright prospects, and the amusements she had planned when she became Lady Elvira Wrottesley; nor did she ever reflect that by so doing she was laying by for herself a store of unavailing regrets, of fruitless lamentations, and planting still deeper a dagger in the bosom of the generous, the affectionate, the confiding Sidney.

CHAPTER IV.

THE sanguinary hopes which Henry Fortescue had entertained of domesticating his wife all vanished after they had been a week in Town. Her first step was to issue cards for a splendid rout, which she fixed for that day month; her next, to call at the Duchess of Aimhigh's, where she knew she should learn all the fashionable news of the times. Although she was the wife of Harry Fortescue, Lady Clementina was glad to see her; and her Grace, well knowing the character she had to deal with, mentioned to her regret, that any misunderstanding should subsist between her family and that of Lord De Courci.

"I never could find out," said Mrs. Fortescue, "what is the reason of our having been all prohibited from associating, or even speaking to that family. My uncle, who

is one of the best creatures in the world, has never assigned, to me at least, any cause for the resentment he continues to harbour against them. I am very sorry for it, for I should like extremely to become intimate with them. Lady Elvira is prodigiously handsome, and so full of spirits."

"She is indeed a charming girl," replied Lady Clementina. "I am vastly fond of her and her sister, only that Lady Angeline is rather too serious for me. Apropos!—I suppose you have heard that Lady Elvira was married yesterday to Everard Wrottesley?"

Mrs. Fortescue answered in the negative. She had not seen the papers before she came out.

"We dined with Lord De Courci on the wedding-day," said her Grace, "and saw the bride and bridegroom set off for Dorrington Park, where they are to stay a week. When they return, Lady Elvira means to open with a grand ball. Somehow or other, you must positively contrive to go with us. All the beauty and fashion of

the present day will be there, and you of course must not be absent."

"I should like it above all things," exclaimed Mrs. Fortescue, "but I am certain I shall not get Henry's consent: he would not act in contradiction to the desire of his father for the world."

"I tried to sound Lord De Courci, but he was shy on the subject," continued her Grace. "He did not, however, shew any symptoms of very great anger at my wishing to be a mediator between the two families, and I rather think would not object to meet the Viscount half way."

"Your Grace is very good, I am sure," said Mrs. Fortescue; "but I fear that will never be the case: for my uncle, although naturally humane, kind, and forgiving, evidently feels a detestation for the De Courcis."

"Well, well; I must see what can be done. Lord Desmond speaks highly of your sister-in-law. I intend as soon as Lady Elvira returns to give a dance; and I know he will solicit the honour of her

hand. The Viscount of course will not be of my party, or he would spoil all my plot. Pray, is Miss Aveland returned home? She is a pretty, engaging girl. I shall hope to see her on that night."

"Julia leaves us in ten days," replied Mrs. Fortescue, "which I am very sorry for. She is a good creature, and a most pleasant, obliging companion. Harry and myself have promised to return her at the expiration of that time to her parents, who doat on her; and really she is deserving of all their fondness. My uncle is uncommonly partial to her; and, between ourselves, would be very glad to see her the wife of Sidney."

"And do you think he is fond of her?" hastily demanded Lady Lucy.

"I cannot tell," replied Mrs. Fortescue, "for he is so much altered within the last six months, that we know not what to make of him. But I shall stay chatting all day, and I have fifty other places to call at."

Then shaking hands with the Duchess and her daughters, she ran down stairs;

and vaulted into her carriage with a heart as light as her step. After stopping at a variety of shops, and ordering articles from each, she hastened home, eager to communicate all she had heard.

During her absence, Miss Aveland, who was at work in her friend's room, had observed to Cecil that Lady Elvira's marriage was announced in the daily papers, and expressed her apprehensions of the effect the sudden discovery might have upon her brother.

While she was speaking Sidney entered, and inquired if they had done with the papers.

"There is nothing worth reading in them," said his sister. "But, my dear Sidney, if you are disengaged, we shall be much obliged to you if you will finish that beautiful poem, 'The Pleasures of Hope.'"

"Certainly: but I must first have a peep at the paper. Where is it, Cecil?"

"Julia has it, I believe."

Miss Aveland looked embarrassed, and Sidney, who saw it from beneath her work, which she had hid in her lap, playfully at-

tempted to take it from her. At length he succeeded, and ran to the window with his prize. Cecil and Julia sat trembling with fear. They watched Sidney as he carelessly ran over the columns of the paper. They saw him start, change colour, and stagger against the wall.

“Come, my beloved Sidney,” said his sister, rising and taking his hand; “come and sit down by the fire. You are cold, and perhaps not very well. Julia shall finish the book for you.”

She led him to the couch on which Miss Aveland was sitting, and placed him between them. Poor Sidney seemed perfectly unconscious of where he was, and gazed around him with a vacant stare that brought tears into the eyes of Julia and his sister. “Feel,” said the latter, “how cold he is. Take his hand, Julia, and try to warm it, while I run into the bed-room and fetch him some drops.”

Miss Aveland tremblingly obeyed. She involuntarily pressed his hand to her lips. Sidney looked at her for a moment, then burst into tears. Deeply affected by his

distress, she again raised his hand to her lips. Her tears fell upon it. Cecil returned with the drops, which he took, and appeared relieved. His eyes turned towards Julia, who sat weeping by his side. "My gentle friend," said he in a voice broken by internal sufferings, "I perceive that you are acquainted with the extent of my wrongs. Oh! Julia! Cecil, you know not the strength, the tenderness of my fatal passion for that worthless woman. You know not that for her sake I dared to brave the anger of my father, the displeasure of my relations. That for her sake I would have embraced every danger, even death, could I but have called her mine. Cruel Elvira! to abandon a heart that doated on thee to madness."

The sobs of Julia startled him. Affectionately taking her hand, he pressed it to his bosom. "My sweet friend!" said he, "how can I express my gratitude for this generous sympathy! My sister, my dearest Cecil, come to my arms. Let me kiss off those precious tears of affection, shed for your unhappy brother." He flung his arms

round them both, and drew them tenderly towards him. "Disappointed in my first dearest wishes, deserted by the idol of my fondest affection, I yet possess the rich treasure of my Cecil's love—my dear Julia's friendship."

For the first time he pressed his lips to the cheek of Miss Aveland, who blushed at the touch, yet did not withdraw herself from his embrace, for Cecil sanctioned her stay.

"My beloved Sidney," said his sister, "you must try to forget a woman every way unworthy such a heart as your's. Inconstant, light, and wavering, she would but ill have repaid your generous love, had she even become your wife. Oh! my dear, dear Sidney! how I rejoice that you have escaped the misery of being united to so worthless a creature!"

Sidney sighed deeply. "You, my dearest sister, have never loved. You may feel keenly for my distress, but you cannot imagine the severity of my sufferings in having placed all my hopes of happiness on one object; and then finding that object

faithless and untrue to her solemn promise of eternal love. Time, my Cecil, may meliorate my grief, may soften the poignancy of my present feelings; but it will never be able to extinguish the remembrance of my blighted hopes. Base as my reason tells me she is, my heart yet throbs with tenderness at her name. You see, my dear Julia, that your poor friend is not worthy of your tender sympathy, since he cannot wholly detest the fatal and unworthy cause of his misery."

Miss Aveland raised her tearful eyes towards his. "I cannot avoid feeling all your unhappiness," said she, in a sweet and tender voice, "for I am confident that if I was once to place my affections on an object, no time or circumstance, not even the infidelity of that object, could alter my sentiments."

Sidney's eyes beamed with approving kindness as she spoke, and he pressed her hand with unusual warmth. "Dear Julia, then I at least am sure of possessing your esteem, your delightful sympathy. Your heart will make allowance for the errors of

your friend. He will, however, endeavour to be more deserving your good opinion." Saying this, he rose and embraced his sister, who affectionately threw her arms round his neck, and laid her blooming cheek to his.

When he had quitted them, Miss Aveland wiped away her tears, and returned the tender caresses of Cecil. "Dearest Julia," said her friend, "at present my poor brother suffers greatly from the infidelity of the object of his first affection, but he feels so truly your merits, and values so highly your friendship, that I entertain hopes of yet calling you by the dear name of sister."

"My beloved Cecil," replied Miss Aveland, "do not attempt to fill my bosom with such rapturous ideas. How poor, how insignificant is my exterior when compared to the faultless person of Lady Elvira! I dare not hope to supplant so beautiful a creature. Alas! what kind of heart must she possess, to abandon a lover like your brother. Oh! Cecil, my dear friend! had it been my happy lot to attract the attention, to secure the affection of

Sidney, I could have died to save him from his father's anger. But I could never, never have proved unfaithful to him."

Miss Fortescue pressed her warmly to her heart. "Do not despair, my Julia. Your person may not be so strikingly beautiful as the unworthy daughter of my father's enemy, but it possesses loveliness far more attractive. A sweet temper, a calm and steady mind, and a feeling heart, beams in every feature of my Julia's countenance. I am no prophetess, dear girl, and yet I cannot help foretelling that you are destined to be my sister."

The highly expressive face of Miss Aveland evinced the gratitude and pleasure which this assurance gave her. The conversation of these amiable girls was now interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Fortescue, who, throwing herself on a seat, vowed she was half dead with fatigue. She soon, however, recovered herself, and repeated all she had heard at the Duchess of Aimhigh's. At the mention of Lord Desmond's name, the cheeks of Cecil assumed a deeper hue, and her heart felt secretly

gratified that he had thought her worthy his praise.

“Positively,” cried Mrs. Fortescue, “it is a cruel thing that we are not suffered to speak to those lovely sisters, just because their father and our’s quarrelled. If I could but persuade Harry to let me invite them to my party on the twenty-third, how happy I should be. Do you think, Cecil, he would be angry with me if I proposed it to him?”

“I would not advise you, my dear Lucinda, because I know it will grieve my brother to refuse you any thing; and this he must deny you, or act contrary to the orders of the Viscount.”

Mrs. Fortescue looked mortified. “It is exceedingly hard indeed,” said she, “that we are to exclude from our parties that charming family; and for what, I am ignorant of. Lady Elyra I am quite enchanted with. She is so gay, so good-humoured, and always makes one at the Duchess’s. It is extremely awkward, when we shall meet constantly, not to be allowed the privilege of a common ac-

quaintance. I must go and seek Harry, and hear what he says."

Equally thoughtless as Lady Elvira, though without any of her other faults, Mrs. Fortescue directed her steps to the library, where she was almost certain of meeting her husband. Pale with the fatigue of the morning, she began to express all her hopes and wishes with respect to the De Courci family, but Henry with firmness immediately silenced all expectation of visiting or receiving visits from them. Unaccustomed to disappointment, the tears stood trembling in her eyes, and her features expressed the inward vexation she endured.

"My dearest Lucinda," said Henry, kissing her pale cheek, "I trust that as this is the first, so it may be the last time I shall ever oppose any of your wishes. Believe me, that it pains me deeply to deny a request of your's, but my father had good grounds for his resentment. It is the duty of his children to obey his earnest injunction of avoiding as much as possible the family of his bitterest enemy ;

and my Lucinda, when she hears the story of his injuries, will yield with a better grace to his prohibition." He then briefly related the unfortunate circumstances which had rendered it necessary for the Viscount to sacrifice his own dearest wishes to the dignity of his family, and concluded by saying that he was convinced his wife would see the propriety of the orders of his father.

Mrs. Fortescue did not want feeling or affection. The natural goodness of her heart was obscured by a fashionable education and too exuberant spirits, which frequently led her to commit little improprieties that she otherwise would not have done. She listened with great attention to the narrative of her husband, and her tears streamed afresh as he pathetically described the sufferings of his father and the innocent Lady Emma. She felt convinced by the reasoning of Henry, yet she still lamented that she should be obliged to leave out the names of the sisters from her invitation cards.

Henry, who was ignorant of Lady El-

vira's marriage until told of it by his wife, hastily sought his brother, as soon as she had retired to dress. He found him in his own apartments, musing deeply upon the inconstancy of her ladyship. At the sight of Henry he rose, and, taking his hand, said with a faint smile, "You will no longer have occasion, my dear Harry, to advise me to forget Lady Elvira: she yesterday put the seal to my misery: she has abandoned me, Henry, for another; for one, who, perhaps, would not have risked so much as I did to gain her love. But it is past—now she can never be mine—and when we next meet, she shall see that her desertion has not quite broken my foolish heart."

Henry embraced him. "The resolution is worthy of you, my dear Sidney: do not allow her for a moment to suppose that she was so sacredly dear to you. She is, perhaps, the only woman who, after gaining such a heart as your's, could basely act as she has done. We shall be compelled to meet at the Duchess's ball: Julia Aveland goes with us; secure her for a partner the

chief of the night. I know of no one more truly deserving your attention than that amiable girl. Cecil cannot feel more keenly your misfortune than the sweet Julia does. Lady Elvira, my dear Sidney, only amused herself with your passion, only trifled with your heart ; she never loved you : that her conduct has proved. She deserves, however, to be mortified by the apparent indifference I wish you to assume ; attach yourself closely to our engaging little friend, and let her fickle ladyship discover that you by no means feel inclined to hang or drown yourself on her account."

" Your advice is admirable," replied Sidney, " and I will follow it, my dear brother. Although she has not loved me, yet I well know that my indifference and coolness, at a time when she supposes me smarting from her inconstancy, will wound her vanity and self-love. I saw a gloom overspread her countenance on the night of the masquerade, when I turned all my attentions on Lady Lucy Aimhigh. Her pride will be hurt that I should so soon recover my freedom. Ah ! Henry, I shall

require all your firmness and prudence to withstand the magic of her seducing eye; should she but exert all its enchanting witcheries, I am undone beyond relief."

"Fear not," said his brother, in an encouraging tone of voice. "The only way to forget a faithless mistress, is to seek a new one: or let friendship exert its delightful influence over your soul. My father dines out to-day: we will be denied to every one, and enjoy the luxury of a family party, undisturbed by any unwelcome intruders. Come, my brother, be quick; we have only ten minutes to dress for dinner."

In giving this advice to Sidney, his brother was actuated by a far different motive than that of piquing the pride or self-love of Lady Elvira. He ardently wished that Sidney would attach himself to Miss Aveland, as he knew her to be every way deserving his regard; yet he felt that to propose such a thing seriously to Sidney would perhaps for ever prevent its taking place: he also knew, that could he but lead his brother to take particular notice of Julia, her own sweetness and endearing

qualities would ever after fix his affections. It was upon this account that he advised him to select that interesting girl as his chief partner for the night; nor could he have chosen a more proper object to succeed Lady Elvira in the heart of Sidney than Julia Aveland.

After dinner Henry proposed music, and Mrs. Fortescue willingly assented. Sidney led her to the piano, where Cecil accompanied her in some fine duets; but the sound of Julia's voice to her harp had alone the effect of tranquillizing his mind: the soft tones of her voice soothed his feelings more than the rapid and masterly execution of his sisters, while the evident pleasure he received encouraged the timid Julia to proceed: she exerted herself to amuse him, and she was repaid by his grateful smile and his unqualified approbation. The evening passed agreeably: all strove to divert his melancholy; and Sidney, thankful for their kindness, gratified them by an appearance of cheerfulness that Henry and Cecil did not expect. Lulled by this seeming resignation to his

fate, his affectionate family cherished the fond hope that Lady Elvira's matchless form would no longer have power to disturb the mind of their beloved Sidney, and even Julia suffered herself to believe that his heart would soon free itself from the power of her fatal beauty.

The Viscount, however, judged right when he said that the gay and volatile Sidney, when once attached, would love ardently and faithfully."

At length the evening fixed for the Duchess's ball arrived, and the family assembled in the drawing-room of the Viscount to wait for their carriages. Miss Aveland was dressed in a style of simple elegance, which accorded with the natural loveliness of her person; and Sidney, for whom alone she had been anxious to please, could not help expressing his admiration of her appearance and purity of taste. Cecil looked uncommonly beautiful: she had chosen a dress the same as her friend's, of white sarcenet, richly trimmed with broad vandyke lace. Her fine yellow hair, which curled in natural ringlets over her bloom-

ing face, was confined by a diamond comb, while her snowy bosom and shoulders were shaded like Julia's, with a tucker of lace. The Viscount gazed on her with parental fondness ; he kissed her polished forehead, while his heart secretly exulted in the possession of such a daughter.

Sidney had gathered a couple of bunches of the lily of the valley from the pots which perfumed the room, and, presenting one to each, said, " Forgive me, my dear Cecil and Julia, if I rob you of your roses, and place these sweet flowers in their places. The lily of the valley is a particular favourite of mine, and will suit the chastity of your dresses better than the queen of flowers." He fixed in the bosom of his sister one of the little bunches, and then turning to Julia, who had already displaced the rose-buds, he stood for a moment irresolute. The deep suffusion on her cheek checked the wish prompted by gallantry ; he caught the bud from her hand, and as he pressed it to his lips, presented her with the lilies which he had selected. Miss Aveland received them

with inward pleasure, and carefully placed them in her bosom, at the same time she joined with the rest in acknowledging the superior taste of Sidney.

Mrs. Fortescue was splendidly attired for the occasion : she wore a profusion of jewels, and displayed great elegance of mind in the selection of her dress and ornaments : she had added to the small quantity of rouge she generally wore, and as it increased the lustre of her eyes, it heightened the tout ensemble of her charms. On their arriving at the Duchess of Aïm-high's, the throng of carriages was so great, that they were obliged to wait some time before their's could draw up. The servant had just delivered in their names, when he had to announce Lord Desmond, and Lady Angeline De Courci. By an involuntary impulse, Cecil turned her head, and met the fine dark eyes of his lordship, whose features instantly crimsoned with delight on seeing her again. The glance was momentary, but it shot through the heart of Cecil, who hardly knew that Henry was leading her and his wife to

the circle that surrounded the Duchess and her handsome daughters. Lord Desmond and Lady Angeline followed close behind: her Grace nodded expressively to him while she was speaking to the Fortescues, and he waited anxiously to solicit the honour of Cecil's hand.

Conscious that her duty ought to have directed her otherwise, she yet felt unable to refuse him, and the interesting son of the unfortunate Lady Emma sought not to conceal the rapture he experienced on finding her disengaged.

“ My Cecil,” whispered Henry, “ I need not remind you to remember the desires of our father. Chance, or I know not what, seems to attach the two families still to each other: the open and ingenuous countenance of Lord Desmond betrays his admiration of your person. Dearest Cecil, guard your heart against the merits of this amiable enemy: your prudence, I trust, will teach you not to encourage his fruitless hopes.”

The Duchess had called to him as he had finished speaking, and Lord Desmond

at the same instant took the hand of Miss Fortescue to lead her to the ball-room. The impression which the words of Henry had made was visible in her lovely features.

“ Pardon me, my dear Miss Fortescue,” said his lordship, in a voice which thrilled through her heart, “ if a stranger, such as I am unfortunately destined to remain, may dare presume to inquire what has so suddenly clouded the heavenly serenity of your features. I watched your amiable brother as he spoke : his eyes glanced on me with an expression which my heart too well translated. Oh ! if he had the feelings, the wishes of that heart, how would he sympathize in my regrets that cruel fortune compels the children to suffer for the animosity of their parents !”

A tear stood in the sweet blue eye of Cecil. “ Dear Miss Fortescue,” he continued, “ the moment I beheld you my heart involuntarily sprang towards you : it would not be restrained by the awful resentment of the Viscount, or the dread of your brother’s anger. Say, but that you

lament the unhappy difference which divides the two houses."

"That I may own," replied Cecil, "without infringing on the commands of my father; and permit me to assure you, my Lord, that my brothers' feelings are in unison with mine and your own."

He pressed her hand tenderly, and they joined the dancers. Next to them, on one side stood Sidney and Julia Aveland, Lady Angeline and the Marquis of Arlington on the other. Sidney bowed to Lord Desmond, who returned the salute with no common degree of satisfaction, while the expressive eyes of Lady Angeline and the lovely Cecil betrayed to each other the kind and friendly emotions which passed within them.

Henry, with Lady Clementina for a partner, now advanced towards Lady Angeline, who was listening silently to the admiration of the young marquis: she started and coloured deeply as Henry took her hand, afraid lest in his speaking countenance she should read his sentiments on her sister's conduct. Not daring

to raise her eyes from the ground, Henry passed on, half mortified at not receiving one look of remembrance from the woman he so highly venerated.

In the refreshment-room Lady Clementina took the arm of her ladyship, but shortly quitted her to speak to a relation that had passed. The Marquis was gone to seek refreshment, and Henry instinctively took the vacant seat by the side of Lady Angeline: both trembled, both looked confused, both wished to speak, and yet were silent.

At length, "I am afraid, Mr. Fortescue," said her ladyship in a low voice, "since we last met your opinion of us is changed: I am afraid that you no longer think us worthy of your esteem: but I cannot help assuring you that the deep sense I have of the obligation I owe you remains the same."

Henry, not less embarrassed, replied, "My opinion of you, amiable Lady Angeline, can never alter. I may feel hurt at the fickle conduct of your sister, but the sentiments your virtue, delicacy, and

gentleness, inspired me with, will remain while I exist."

The Marquis now approached, and Henry, with a suppressed sigh, resigned his seat, and sought after his wife, who was preparing for the next dance, regardless of the fear he had expressed for her health. Lord Desmond had engaged Miss Aveland, and Sidney joined his sister, who proposed to rest until the next dances; when she was again engaged to his lordship. They sauntered through the card-rooms, and were returning into the ball-room, when Sidney heard Lady Elvira Wrottesley's name announced, and the next moment saw her enter, leaning on the arm of her husband. Never had she appeared so engagingly beautiful; never did Sidney require more fortitude and presence of mind than at that instant.

"There is the perfidious Lady Elvira," exclaimed Cecil, hastening onward. "Courage, my brother, do not gratify her by a sight of your paleness."

"Am I pale?" inquired Sidney, half-fainting with agitation. "How vexatious!

yet is she not beautiful, my sister, beyond description beautiful? Oh! I could gaze for ever on her exquisite form, and think myself supremely happy but to behold her."

"Think only of her baseness," replied Cécil, with warmth: "think only of the poor and pitiful soul which inhabits that exquisite form. Oh! my brother, suffer not your senses to be again misled by the beautiful exterior of that faithless woman."

Sidney sighed deeply. The Duchess and Lady Elvira passed: the latter coloured as she caught the upbraiding eye of the Viscount's son: her confusion increased, as the Duchess turned back, and inquired if Sidney wanted a partner. On his replying that he was engaged, they proceeded; but not before the animated and expressive features of Cécil had discovered to Lady Elvira her contempt and indignation.

When the dances were over, Miss Aveland and Henry joined Cécil and her brother, who endeavoured to rally his broken

spirits, and conceal the real state of his feelings. He placed himself next to Julia, and inquired how she liked her partner ; yet he heard not the praises which she bestowed on the son of Lady Emma : his eyes unconsciously sought the ruin of his peace, and it was only the tender expression of Julia's countenance that recalled his wandering thoughts.

“ Forgive me, my sweet friend,” said he, gently pressing her hand. “ I am myself again. Your eyes shall no longer reprove me for my weakness.”

“ Ah !” cried she affectionately, “ I meant not to reprove ; my eyes were traitors to my heart, if they spoke any language but that of sympathy and friendship. Perhaps I might wish ——”

“ What, dear Julia ?”

“ That my friend would exert himself to-night, and not let the cruel Lady Elvira rejoice in his pains.”

“ Dear girl,” exclaimed Sidney, while his fine eyes sparkled with gratitude, “ you shall have your wish. Promise not to dance with any one but myself ; your

presence, your soothing voice, will animate me to exertion, will make me all you and my family could wish."

"Sidney," said Henry in a low voice, "you are dearer to me than ever. Persevere, my brother, and the noblest victory is your's."

At that moment, as if to try the strength of Sidney's resolution, the beautiful inconstant passed with her sister. The latter, ashamed to raise her eyes, kept them modestly fixed on the ground, while Lady Elvira boldly cast a look on each of the Fortescues as she sauntered by them.

With extreme difficulty Henry persuaded his wife to relinquish her intention of dancing the next dances: she declared that she was not tired, although her appearance contradicted the assertion: she, however, yielded to the earnest entreaties of her husband, and accompanied him into the card-room, where they were joined by the Duchess, who requested them to make two at cassino. Nothing was heard but expressions of admiration at the superior beauty of Lady Elvira Wrottesley: the

men all envied Everard the possession of such a perfect creature, and the women wished for her attractions. Mr. Wrottesley was the partner of Mrs. Fortescue, and Henry of the Duchess.

The affable and polished manners of the son of Lord Dorrington gained the good opinion of Henry Fortescue: he had seldom found himself more interested by the external appearance of any one, and he regretted most sincerely that a man, apparently calculated to render any worthy woman happy, should be united for life to the unfeeling and cold-hearted Lady Elvira.

The fortitude of his brother was doomed to undergo a severe trial: her ladyship had purposely declined dancing, until she saw him stand up with Miss Aveland; she then honoured the Duke of Auburn with her hand, and joined the dance. A woman of common delicacy would have avoided as much as possible the sight, much more the touch, of a man she had once promised to love faithfully: but Lady Elvira boldly ran over the modest and

lovely features of Julia Aveland, and secretly determined to withdraw Sidney's attention from that amiable girl, piqued at his seeming to be free from the power of her charms.

Sidney felt the indelicacy of her behaviour; and as he was obliged once more to touch the hand he had so fondly hoped to call his own, he felt indignant at the little shame or feeling her conduct evinced. He saw her large voluptuous blue eyes first cast an angry glance on his worthy partner, then beam on him with languishing tenderness. But he turned aside his head from their fatal influence, while his cheek crimsoned with the blush of manly shame, to find the object of his first love, his tenderest adoration, so every way unworthy of his heart. "I must have been mad," thought he, "or infatuated, to expect constancy or pure and chaste affection from eyes like those."

The pride of Lady Elvira was severely hurt at the assumed indifference of her former lover. "What avails it," thought she, "that the world owns my superior beauty,

if there is one man in it whose heart can so easily recover its freedom, after having once been my willing slave. I must be revenged on Sidney for his coolness of to-night.” With this *amiable* determination her ladyship purposely watched for a favourable opportunity, when throwing into her countenance the softest expression of tenderness, she whispering asked him if he would go down one dance with her. Sidney, though surprised by the request, yet felt the magical influence of her voice, the witchery of her beautiful eyes : fortunately he was engaged. Doubly mortified, Lady Elvira retired amongst the crowd ; but though foiled in her first attempt, she was not vanquished. “ He may flatter himself,” said she, “ that he is free from my power, but he shall soon feel the effects of his neglect.”

True to his promise, Sidney attached himself for the remainder of the night to Julia Aveland, nor deigned to bestow a look on the fair object of universal admiration, although Lady Lucy repeatedly asked him if he did not think Lady Elvira the

handsomest woman in the room. Elated at his self-command, Sidney returned to his father's in high spirits, conscious that he had deserved the praise which his family bestowed upon his conduct.

The next morning Cecil heard from her friend the warm encomiums which Lord Desmond had uttered to Julia during the time she was his partner. "I assure you," said Miss Aveland smiling, "that had his lordship amused me with the praise of any other woman than my dear Cecil, I should have thought him extremely ungallant, but I do not know how it was. I felt pleased at his correct taste, and absolutely joined in agreeing to all he said. I wish, my dearest friend, that I could with propriety congratulate you upon the conquest you have gained. I am quite in love with him myself; never have I seen but one person before who interested me so strongly in their behalf."

"He is truly prepossessing," replied Miss Fortescue, sighing as she spoke, "and seems to inherit all his mother's virtues and sweetness of temper. How very

singular, Julia, is it not, that some secret impulse appears to attach the children of the two families to each other in contradiction to the hostile feelings of their parents? How strange that Sidney should be thrown in the way of that beautiful inconstant Lady Elvira, and that he should voluntarily rush into every danger, arising from my father's resentment, for her sake. Lord Desmond acknowledged that the moment he beheld me he felt himself instinctively drawn towards me; and I confess, Julia, that the son of the innocent Lady Emma was not seen by me with indifference. To you, dear friend of my bosom, I may discover my weakness, without fear of being upbraided for it. Lord Desmond has made an impression on my heart that no time or circumstance can obliterate; at the same moment, let me add, that my duty to my father, and the respect I feel for his commands, will prevent my encouraging the love of this amiable enemy. I cannot avoid being soothed by his attentions, or inwardly gratified by his affection, but my very love for him

shall enable me to withstand the tender pleadings of his voice and eyes. Yes, dear Julia, I acknowledge I love Lord Desmond, but sacredly will I guard him from the displeasure of my father, and the vain regrets of his own conscience."

"You are capable of all you say, my dear Cecil. Oh! that I possessed your firmness. To-morrow I must return to my honoured parents, but I cannot sincerely own that it will be without reluctance. I shall leave your brother, my Cecil, at the moment when he seems inclined to derive amusement and consolation from the few talents I possess, and from the interest which he is aware I take in his misfortunes. I dread the influence of the cold-hearted Lady Elvira: with trembling I perceived her eyes attentively fixed on us during the night, and have every thing to fear, lest mortified vanity may induce her to exert her powers of fascination again over the mind and heart of our dear Sidney. I shudder at the idea that interest and ambition alone has directed her in her marriage. During my absence I shall be

wholly forgotten, or perhaps remembered with indifference."

"That is impossible, my sweet friend," replied Cecil. "I could have wished, however, that you were to continue with us this winter, as well from selfish motives, as on account of my brother, who, I am convinced, feels more happy in your presence. I assure you, he has frequently lamented that he should so soon lose the pleasure of your society. My father also regrets it, and I rather think means to accompany you, with Henry and Lucinda, to the General's. But let us go down into the drawing-room; perhaps he may mention something of the matter."

The Viscount was quitting the room as they entered. As usual, he kissed them both affectionately, and taking the hand of Julia, said, "I cannot bear the idea of parting from you, my dear little girl: we are all become so fond of you, that I must petition your worthy parents in person to spare you to us for the remainder of the season. Sidney is quite low at the thought of your departure, therefore, my dear Julia,

if they cannot live any longer without you, I must make them my prisoners, and bring you all back with me to London."

Miss Aveland's eyes sparkled with delight: she kissed the hand of the Viscount as he left the apartment, and turned affectionately to Sidney, who expressed his hopes that his father would be successful in his application to the General. Henry joined in the wish, and Mrs. Fortescue declared that she should be quite vexed if she was not in Town at the time of her rout. "Besides," said she, "Lady Arlington's music party will be on the fourth of next month, and her ladyship will be so disappointed if you are not there. I told her you sung and played divinely."

"Your partiality leads you to think so, my dear Mrs. Fortescue; but if I am so fortunate as to accompany you to the Marchioness's, I shall never have courage to perform before so large a company."

"And yet, my dear friend," said Sidney, "you have nothing to prevent you but your diffidence. Few can boast a voice so rich and mellow as your's. I shall allow

myself to rely upon your going with us, or else it is most likely that I shall decline the engagement."

Julia's heart fluttered at this unlooked-for compliment, and she unwillingly quitted the chamber, to pay some morning visits with Mrs. Fortescue and Cecil. The last place they called at was the Duchess of Aimhigh's, who, as well as her daughters, expressed their regret at Miss Aveland's departure.

"We shall most probably stay a week at the General's," said Mrs. Fortescue, "as my uncle goes with us, in order to persuade him and Mrs. Aveland to let Julia return and spend the winter with us. For my part, I shall take no denial, and I assure you, I do not mean to leave Town again until after the birth-day, unless we occasionally pass a few weeks at Sidney Lodge, which is so near Town, that it is only a pleasant ride before dinner. In that case, I flatter myself that your Grace will often honour us with a call."

"You may be assured I will," replied the goodnatured Duchess. "My girls will

be delighted to pass a few hours so agreeably ; and you may reckon upon seeing them frequently while we remain in London. After the birth-day, we all set off for Scotland, and shall continue there for the remainder of the summer. You I suppose will return to the Abbey.”

Mrs. Fortescue replied in the affirmative, and they took leave, her Grace shaking Julia cordially by the hand, and hoping to see her at Lady Arlington’s, assuring her that she would receive a great deal of pleasure, as many of the first performers, both public and private, would be present.

Sidney in reality felt depressed at the idea of losing his amiable little friend ; her kindness, her soothing voice, her tender and expressive eyes, contributed more towards restoring his mind to serenity than the united efforts of all his family, or the powerful pleadings of his own reason. He handed her to the carriage which was to convey her home with a pensiveness of countenance visible to them all, and as he pressed her hand to his lips more than once, again entreated his father not to return

without her. The Viscount smiled affectionately on his eldest son and nodded his assent, telling him to be the guardian of Cecil during his absence ; while Julia thanked him with her eyes for his kind wishes, and could not help expressing her hopes that she should see him and his sister at the expiration of a week.

CHAPTER V.

THE universal admiration paid to the faultless person of Lady Elvira Wrottesley failed to animate her as was usual, and she retired from the gazing assembly at the Duchess of Aimhigh's with a heart filled with very different emotions from those with which she had entered it. Restless and uneasy was now become the nuptial bed: the image of Sidney, such as he was before her infidelity, haunted her mind: she recurred to those scenes of their mutual endearments when he had willingly hazarded every thing to gain a sight of her; when she had herself anticipated his wishes, and with equal eagerness longed for the appointed hour which brought him to the root-house of the lake. Conscious that she had herself alone to accuse for the change in his behaviour, she never-

theless felt hurt that he should so soon pay his attentions to another, and still more so, that he should be able to resist even the solicitations of her eyes, which must plainly have told him her desire to speak to him. His cold indifference severely wounded her pride, and betrayed, when too late, to herself, the real state of her affection.

Incapable of a pure and generous attachment, Lady Elvira yet loved Sidney dearer than any other being ; she had sacrificed him to caprice and the natural fickleness of her disposition ; she had involved, by her inconstancy, not only his peace, but that of the truly amiable son of Lord Dorrington ; yet her chief feeling now arose from selfishness and mortified vanity ; and she determined to run every risk to again engage his attentions : she accordingly paid a morning visit to her friend the Duchess, and lamented to her more earnestly than ever the unhappy difference which subsisted between her family and the Viscount's. She pretended to be much strack with the female part of it, and deplored

her inability to invite them to her parties so pathetically, that her Grace heartily joined with her ladyship in wishing that some expedient could be found to remove the hatred of Lord Fortescue.

“I already discover,” said the Duchess, “that your cousin Desmond is attached to the handsome daughter of the Viscount, and the obstacles to his passion will only render it more violent. I think, could we so contrive as to throw them more frequently in each other’s way, that a mutual affection might take place, and it is not probable that the Viscount would sacrifice the happiness of his only daughter to the resentment he entertains for your family. Mrs. Fortescue told me that they do not leave Town until after the birth-day, and that they will most likely pass some of their time at Sidney Lodge, a favourite residence of her uncle’s, about eight miles from Town. How do you dispose of yourself until June? for a thought has just struck me, in case you have not fixed all your movements. Close to the Lodge stands the elegant villa of Lord Winter-

ton. I know he wishes to dispose of it for a few months; suppose you get Wrottesley to take it. You will frequently have your cousin with you; and as the grounds are only separated by a hedge of laurel, he will have excellent opportunities of seeing Miss Fortescue, and of course speaking to her. I know of no better plan to facilitate an union between the hostile families; for my part, I am so decided an enemy to all illnature and family resentments, that I will do any thing to reconcile your uncle and the Viscount."

The eyes of Lady Elvirá sparkled with satisfaction: she thanked her Grace over and over again, and agreed in thinking that it would be the best chance in the world to bring about what she so ardently wished for. She then took a hasty leave of the Duchess, and returned home, elated at the idea of residing so close to the object of her present determined vengeance.

Under pretence of wishing, occasionally, to be out of Town, and yet close to it, she got Mr. Wrottesley to accompany her

next day to see the house. The situation pleased him, and he immediately settled about the terms. The heart of Lady Elvira beat violently as she walked over the grounds, and saw the lodge belonging to her former lover. It had been in the possession of Lord Winterton until purchased by the Viscount, and that accounted for the slight separation of the gardens.

Mr. Wrottesley inquired of the servant who attended them who was the owner of the lodge, then turning to her ladyship, said "Do you recollect, my dear Elvira, we met the sons of Lord Fortescue at the Duchess of Aimhigh's ball? I was very much struck by their appearance, and shall be happy to get acquainted with them."

Her ladyship replied with affected indifference, that she should also be highly pleased to form an intimacy with the Viscount's daughters, but that she feared, from the animosity which existed between the two families; that it would not be an easy matter.

"Do you know the cause, my beloved?"

said her husband : “ unless it is a very good one, I assure you that I shall not join in keeping up family prejudices.”

“ Not very well,” replied her ladyship. “ My aunt Desmond promised to tell us the reason ; and now I think of it, I will call to-morrow and inquire of Angeline if she has heard it since I left my uncle’s ; if not, I will myself ask my aunt to disclose this unpleasant secret.”

“ Do, my dear Elvira, for I felt so charmed by the affable and winning manners of the whole family, that I shall be extremely sorry to be included in the prohibition.”

“ I fear you will,” cried her ladyship, “ for I have reason to think that the dislike of the Viscount is much stronger than that of my uncle.”

The next morning Lady Elvira drove to Grosvenor Square, and found her sister and aunt at work, while her cousin Robert read to them. After the first salutations were over, she artfully recurred to the Duchess’s ball and her own approaching rout, and then mentioned the desire Mr.

Wrottesley had expressed to become intimate with the sons of Lord Fortescue.

“ Dear aunt,” said she, “ it is so extremely uncomfortable that we should eternally be obliged to avoid noticing a family that we meet with at every party. What can be the reason that the Viscount is less inclined to forgive than my uncle?”

“ Because,” replied Lady Desmond, with agitation, “ the Viscount was the most injured person. I promised you, my dear nieces, one day or other to disclose the fatal cause of the enmity which Lord Fortescue so justly feels towards our family. I cannot have a better opportunity than the present.”

“ But, my dear aunt,” said Lady Angeline, “ are you well enough to enter on so painful a subject?”

“ Yes, my beloved girl. It is necessary that my son, as well as yourselves, should be acquainted with the domestic secrets of your family; it is but fair also that you should not suppose Lord Fortescue acts from unjust or capricious motives.”

Lord Desmond, with anxiety and attention, seated himself by the side of his mother, who, calling up all her fortitude, paused for a moment, and then addressed her attentive auditors.

“ You are not ignorant, my dear girls, that the Castle of De Courci was the favourite residence of your grandfather and his sons. Fortescue Abbey was equally dear to the Viscount’s family. The strong friendship which had ever subsisted between the father of the present Viscount and mine gave the children of each constant opportunities of associating together. From infancy, I may say, we seemed to be but one family, and as we grew up to years of maturity our affections increased. My brother, the late Earl, was affianced to the only daughter of Lord Fortescue, and my hand was destined at the same time for her youngest brother.” — Lady Desmond wiped off the starting tear and continued.

“ Henry, the present Viscount, was then under age, possessed of a person manly, handsome, and dignified ; but his manners, his sweetness of disposition, his tender-

ness of heart, and his filial piety, I feel incapable of doing justice to. He loved me with an ardour which could only be equalled by its delicacy, and my heart beat in unison with his;—I lived but in his smiles, and the hope of one day repaying all his tenderness. A month before the appointed time for our union, and that of my brother with his sister, Henry went to London: during his absence, your father, my dear girls, unfortunately availed himself of a moment of weakness; and Cecil, the dear friend of my bosom, became his, before the nuptial tie had made them one. Ignorant of what had happened, I saw the increasing gloom overspread the features of your father, and the lovely countenance of my friend no longer retained its heavenly serenity.”

“Henry returned, but not to witness the celebration of his heart’s fondest wishes. He flew to embrace me, he talked of our approaching marriage, but my heart was full: a dreadful presentiment of evil damped the joy his presence always gave birth to. We wandered over the grounds of the

Castle; we rested in a beautiful root-house on the banks of the lake, which was our favourite retreat: yet vain were his efforts to rouse my drooping spirits. Pressed to his faithful bosom, encircled by his protecting arms, I yet looked eagerly around, and feared I knew not what. We parted to meet no more.”—Lady Desmond paused: she felt the tears of her son and Lady Angeline fall on the hands they held: she pressed them to her heart—a heart full of anguish and love.

“My forebodings were just. Henry and I separated for ever. He overheard the conversation of my brother and Cecil the same night, and discovered the injury she had sustained. I had retired to my chamber with a heart heavier than usual, when Phœbe, my faithful attendant, rushed wildly in, and all I could gather from her agitation was, that your father and my beloved Henry had fought, and that my brother was severely wounded. I flew down stairs just as your uncle and the servants were supporting him to his room. I sunk senseless on the ground. All my fears were re-

alized—Henry was lost to me for ever. When I recovered, I sought my imprudent brother. I found him exhausted by the loss of blood, and deeply afflicted by the transaction of the evening: he had scarcely strength left to press my hand to his lips, and implore my forgiveness.

“ You weep, my dear nieces, at the recital of my sufferings ; you too, my beloved Robert, sympathize with your mother. Alas ! my dear children, you know not the extent of my miseries, you know not the heart I lost by the rashness of my brother.

“ All the family quitted the Abbey, and even Henry left it without once seeking an interview, once taking a last farewell of your poor broken-hearted aunt. As soon as my brother’s wound permitted, we left the Castle, the ancient seat of our ancestors, the scene of many a domestic rapture—left it for ever, and travelled slowly to London. My sweet Cecil was no more. Henry had abandoned me to the just resentment of his family, and I was indifferent what became of me. Time could not

eradicate from my heart the image of my betrothed husband ; but circumstances, and the affectionate attention of my relations and friends, meliorated my distress.

“ He married in two years after that fatal night. All the vain hopes which my foolish heart had weakly cherished were now annihilated. My brothers were anxious to see me settled in life, and, perhaps, they wished it not to appear that I felt so deeply the loss I had sustained. Amongst the numerous visitors that frequented our house was your father, my beloved Robert, and no man was ever better calculated to make a woman happy than Lord Desmond. Before I gave him my hand, I made him acquainted with my unhappy story: it rendered me doubly dear to him, and his tears flowed with mine, as I repeated my blighted prospects of youthful happiness.

“ I became his wife, and I flatter myself did not disgrace his generous and disinterested passion. According to my wish, we continued in Ireland; for though the tenderness of your father, my dear son, had gained entire possession of my heart, yet

I scrupled not to avow that I should feel a reluctance to reside in England, where I might probably be compelled frequently to meet the Fortescue family. Two-and-twenty years have now passed since the fatal night which separated me for ever from the object of my first and dearest affections. I have now lost the beloved friend of my bosom, the kind and soothing husband, whose sympathizing nature participated in my sorrows, and hushed to peace every painful remembrance. Hitherto I have fortunately escaped a meeting with Lord Fortescue. I trust I shall yet be spared that dreadful trial of my fortitude.

“You may, however, judge of my feelings, my dear children, on beholding his lovely family. In the sweet Cecil I discovered the companion of my childhood, the exact resemblance of the friend whose early death I had for ever deplored; and with difficulty I refrained from embracing the dear girl. My agitations increased when the sons of Lord Fortescue met my view. The youngest in particular brought his

father so strongly to my mind, that he appeared the same tender, gentle, and affectionate youth that I had pledged my first and fondest affections to. I longed to press them to my bosom, to declare how much I loved them ; but the terrible idea of their father's anger checked the ardent wish. Dear as they ever will be to my heart, yet I will never obtrude myself on the notice of the Viscount. I trust that his sufferings have not equalled mine."

"My adored mother," cried Lord Desmond, as he pressed her hand to his lips, "how severe have been your afflictions, and those of Lord Fortescue! How great the sacrifice he was compelled to make to injured pride, injured honour! Oh! how my heart bleeds for you both: yet surely enough has been done to satisfy the dignity of each family. To continue enèemies, to extend this uncharitable resentment from generation to generation, is unjust, unchristianlike, and illiberal. I would give the world to see the two families united in their ancient bonds of love and friendship. Great have been the injuries which Lord

Fortescue has sustained, great his deprivations, his sufferings ; yet surely another victim is not requisite to appease the spirit of his sister, or gratify the pride of his house."

Lady Desmond looked at her son : he coloured deeply : she cast a glance towards Lady Elvira, and forbore to notice his last words.

" I am afraid," said her eldest niece, recovering from the damp the recital of her aunt had cast upon her spirits, " that the Viscount's animosity will not be easily appeased, and Wrottesley must content himself to be included amongst our proscribed house."

" I fear he must," replied Lady Desmond. " It is certainly a very disagreeable circumstance to be obliged to shun a family so highly interesting and amiable as they are ; yet the delicacy of the affair will not permit your uncle to make any overtures, and the Viscount most likely would disdain them if he did. I forgot to mention that my poor Phœbe shared with me the horrors of that transaction : she was to have

been married on the same day as myself, to a worthy young man, the favourite attendant of the Viscount: but the sudden removal of the family, and my subsequent marriage and residence in Ireland, for ever separated Phœbe from her lover."

"Poor Phœbe!" said Lady Angeline: "she is a good creature, and I shall love her more than ever, for her misfortunes, and her fidelity to you, my dear aunt."

Lady Desmond affectionately kissed her youngest niece. "She has been a most faithful servant to me," said her ladyship; "and her attachment does her infinite credit, since it interfered with that she felt for Robarts. I believe my poor Phœbe has not forgotten her first lover, for she could never be prevailed upon to listen to another."

Lady Angeline almost instinctively turned her eyes towards her sister, who, willing to change the conversation, asked her aunt if she would accompany her that night to the Opera. Lady Desmond assented, and promised to call for her with her son and Lady Angeline. Her ladyship now rose to

take leave, when her uncle entered the drawing-room.

“ I have just parted from Everard and Lord Arlington,” said the Earl: “ he tells me, Elvira, that he yesterday agreed for Lord Winterton’s villa, at ——. I think you are both quite right in securing so pleasant a retreat until after the birth-day. I dislike Town exceedingly myself after the month of April.”

“ I had forgot to mention it to my aunt,” replied her ladyship with her wonted vivacity: “ she will be pleased with the house I am certain; it is elegantly fitted up, and the grounds are laid out with uncommon taste. Angeline will be delighted with them I know; and I shall flatter myself that as your lordship dislikes Town, as soon as the spring commences, you will honour us with your company as early as possible. My dear aunt I think will favour me with her’s as often as she can. I shall take no denial from my sister and Robert.”

“ I can refuse you nothing,” said the Earl, kissing her fondly.

“ Then, my dear uncle, let us see you to night at the Opera.”

Lord De Courci consented, and her ladyship ran down stairs and jumped into her carriage, secretly exulting at the probability of her plan succeeding.

Lady Angeline, upon whom the conversation of the morning had made a deep impression, retired to the music-rooms to practise some new songs, which she intended to sing at Lady Arlington's, should she be compelled to exert her talents. Her spirits were depressed by the sorrowful narration of her beloved aunt, and her mind naturally recurred to the years she had passed at the Castle, under the parental care of Lady Dorothea Archdale. She had taken leave of that kind friend immediately after her sister's marriage, and though she had heard frequently from Mrs. Selby, who assured her that Lady Dorothea's health was mending, yet the affectionate Lady Angeline could not avoid regretting her necessary separation from the guardian of her youth. Her thoughts wandered from her aunt to the beloved sis-

ter, whose union had given her so much uneasiness ; she thought also of the Viscount's family, and the words of her cousin sunk deep into her heart. She sighed, while the tears ran down her cheeks. " Oh ! my father," she exclaimed, raising her hands and eyes to heaven, " another, and another victim must be sacrificed to expiate thy errors !"

In this posture she was discovered by Lord Desmond. Alarmed, he tenderly took her hand, and inquired what was the matter. Accustomed to look upon him as a brother, she threw her white arms round his neck, and wept unrestrained, while his lordship, pressing her still closer to his bosom, wiped away her tears.

" I am better now, dear Robert," said her ladyship. " The conversation of the morning, the sufferings of your beloved mother, has brought on this weakness ; but I am better since I have relieved myself by weeping."

Tenderly kissing her forehead, Lord Desmond replied, " Beloved Angeline, I am low-spirited myself, yet I will not de-

s pair. We are innocent from the offence of your father, and heaven is too just to extend its wrath to the unoffending children of the guilty. Come, my dear cousin, let us practise this beautiful duet : we will sing it together at Lady Arlington's, even should the Marquis send me a challenge the next morning."

Her ladyship smiled sweetly through her tears, and sat down to play it off at first sight. " You may smile, Angeline, but do you know that the Marquis seriously inquired of me yesterday if we were not engaged to each other."

" Indeed ! and what did you say, Robert ?"

" What could I say, Angeline, but the truth ? Why should I trifle with the peace of an amiable young man and my friend, when a monosyllable would put an end to his suspense."

" I esteem Lord Arlington," replied her ladyship, " but I cannot love him. Come, my dear Robert, let us begin."

They continued practising until it was time to dress for dinner, when Lady An-

geline reluctantly attired herself for the Opera, according to the wish of her uncle rather than her own inclination. The Earl had a private box at the Opera-house, they therefore called to take up Lady Elvira and Mr. Wrottesley, and received in addition to their party his brother and the Marquis of Arlington, who had been dining with them.

It was late before they arrived at the Opera-house. The Marquis handed Lady Desmond to her seat, as he wished to have an opportunity of speaking to her. Lady Elvira followed with Herbert Wrottesley ; while her sister, as usual, took the arm of her cousin. Lady Elvira instantly cast her beautiful eyes over the boxes, and discovered in the one next to their's Sidney and his sister. She gave a look towards Lady Angeline, and perceived the eyes of her cousin fixed on the blushing countenance of Miss Fortescue.

Sidney for a moment found himself fascinated by the display of a luxurious bosom, and the tender expression of her languishing eyes. He sighed deeply. The

contrast, however, between her ladyship and the modest retiring Lady Angeline, his sister, or the absent Julia, forcibly struck him. "Oh, Cecil!" said he softly to his sister, whose thoughts were occupied by a far different object, "how exquisitely formed is the beautiful inconstant! How deeply is it to be lamented that her mind is not as faultless as her person!"

Cecil had encountered the fond gaze of Lord Desmond, and she dared not turn her eyes again to their box, while his mother sat trembling with unsubdued affection, unable to withdraw her's from the children of Lord Fortescue.

At the conclusion of the third act her ladyship turned to her brother, who sat behind her, and said in a low voice, "That is Miss Fortescue and her eldest brother in the next box to the left of us: is she not very like her aunt?" The Earl had observed her with the critical notice of a connoisseur, and pronounced her a most lovely girl; he agreed also in the resemblance she bore the beloved friend of his

sister, while his nephew stood either wholly absorbed by the contemplation of her sweet form, or softly whispering his praise to the listening Lady Angeline. The latter more than once caught the eye of Sidney: abashed and confused, she, blushing, turned aside her head, and felt a shame which was unknown to the fickle-minded Lady Elvira.

When the opera was over, they retired to the saloon, to wait until their carriages were ready. Lady Elvira passed so close to Sidney and his sister, that he was compelled to make a slight inclination of the head, as she purposely touched his arm. The colour which dyed his cheek, and the confusion visible in his countenance, betrayed to the watchful beauty that she was not yet perfectly indifferent to him. "I shall still have him in my train of admirers," thought she exultingly, "in spite of old Crabtree, or his own fruitless resolutions to the contrary." Their carriages were now announced, and the whole party returned to sup with her ladyship.

Lady Elvira's mind was now principally

occupied by the idea of inhabiting a house close to that of Sidney Lodge. She sent servants to get it in readiness against the time she should want it, well knowing that her friend the Duchess would give her information of the day when the Fortescue family were to take up their residence at the Lodge. Her own ball was to be that week. A variety of engagements would keep her in Town until April, but she proposed to retire to the villa as early as possible after the Marchioness of Arlington's music party, which was fixed for the fourth of that month.

Had Lady Elvira possessed a heart capable of any generous feeling, the uniform tenderness of her husband, who doated on her with passionate fondness, and who seemed only to exist in her presence, would have checked every idea or wish inimical to his honour or happiness. He was a man calculated to render any amiable, any grateful woman happy: perhaps, had he been less yielding, less solicitous to anticipate the desires of his worthless wife, his own

peace of mind might have been more secure.

Lady Angeline's sweetness of temper, delicate behaviour, and chastity of manners, rendered her the favourite of his father, his sister, and all his family; and next to his beautiful wife, she was beloved by himself. Her disposition, her habits of life, her taste, and refined amusements, all appeared congenial with his own; and he had once or twice repressed a sigh, as he discovered, when too late, that his happiness would have been more permanent, had he allowed his reason and judgment to have directed his choice. A glance, however, from the bright blue eyes of Lady Elvira repaid him for the pain her levity of conduct too frequently gave birth to.

Nothing could be more opposite than the characters of the two sisters. Lady Angeline felt unhappy at the idea of having unintentionally attached to herself the Marquis and Herbert Wrottesley: they had neither of them, it is true, openly declared themselves her lovers, but their ten-

derness was visible in the speaking language of their eyes, and the softness of their voice and manners, whenever they approached or addressed her. The former had been so lavish of his praise at the Opera, that Lady Desmond did not hesitate to pronounce him the devoted admirer of her niece.

Diffidence alone withheld these amiable young men from avowing their adoration, and this was strengthened by the constant attention of Lord Desmond to his cousin. The Marquis had, however, assumed courage to inquire of his friend if he was to consider him as engaged to Lady Angeline; and the answer of the young lord gave hope and rapture to the heart of the inquirer. Tenderly attached to her ladyship, he determined to seek a favourable moment to disclose his affection; yet the dread of meeting with a refusal, the terror of having his hopes annihilated, made him defer from day to day his much wished for avowal.

At the ball of her sister the Marquis solicited and obtained her hand: he longed to

acknowledge how dear she was to him, yet his timidity still kept him silent, and his eyes alone betrayed the secret of his heart. That of the gentle Lady Angeline sympathized in his embarrassment; and though her expressive features bore no trait of reciprocal attachment, no female exultation at the conquest she had gained, yet they evinced a tender interest for his hopeless passion, which the Marquis unfortunately construed into a softer sentiment. Pity beaming from eyes such as Lady Angeline's might have misled a more impartial observer than he was; it rendered them likewise doubly dangerous to behold.

Lady Desmond had flattered herself that the constant attention of her son towards her favourite niece arose from something more than a relation's love; she therefore felt disappointed and vexed at discovering that he favoured the views of Lord Arlington, and actually expressed a wish that he might prove successful. In her heart she could not raise one objection to the match. The Marquis was a young man of great personal endowments, and possessed

of every amiable quality to render him happy in domestic life ; he was likewise master of an immense fortune, and of a heart prodigal in dispensing to others a share of his own comforts : in short, he was every thing that even Lady Desmond's partiality might wish for a husband for her beloved niece. With great delicacy she hinted to Lady Angeline the evident attachment of Lord Arlington ; but the alternate red and white of her cheek, the trembling tear which started while she spoke, gave little hopes of his affection being returned. Unwilling to distress her darling, her ladyship left the affair to time, and the continued tenderness and merits of the Marquis, hoping that these would ultimately gain her affections.

CHAPTER VI.

TEN days had passed since the Viscount accompanied his son and daughter, with Julia, to the seat of General Aveland. Cecil and her brother began to grow impatient for their return : at length the travelling carriage of Lord Fortescue drove up to the door, and they hastened down to receive them. The heart of Sidney felt bitterly disappointed at not seeing Miss Aveland alight, and his father, who enjoyed his vexation, said smilingly, " You do not appear glad to see us, my dear boy. I think we had better return."

Recovering from his embarrassment, Sidney confessed that he had entertained great hopes of seeing Julia accompany him. " We did all we could to persuade the General," said Mrs. Fortescue : " did we not,

Harry? But come, Cecil, with me to my room."

Miss Fortescue, equally grieved and disappointed with Sidney, followed her sister-in-law to her dressing-room, where, to her surprise and joy, she found her friend Julia sitting by the fire-side. After embracing her, she inquired how she got there.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Fortescue, "we all agreed to surprise Sidney: the Viscount stopped the carriage at the end of the street, and got out with Julia, who he saw safe into the care of the housekeeper, then returned to us, and we drove home without her, to the mortification of poor Sidney."

Cecil now led her delighted friend to her own apartments, and again embracing her, expressed her sincere pleasure at having her once more with her, while Miss Aveland, highly gratified by the concern Sidney had evinced at her supposed absence, forgot that it was necessary to make some alteration in her dress before she joined the family in the dining-room. Cecil, however, reminded her, and in a few mi-

minutes she was ready to attend her friend. Softly they descended, and paused at the door of the dining-parlour at the sound of Sidney's voice : he was expressing his surprise to the Viscount that for the first time his eloquence had failed him ; when his sister gently opened the door, and with Julia got unobserved behind him.

“ It is very provoking,” said he, “ that the General would neither spare his daughter, nor accept of your invitation. Julia I am sure will be vexed at not going to Lady Arlington's, for she is so particularly fond of music, that it would have been quite a treat to her.”

“ Very true, my dear boy,” replied his father, “ and I perfectly agree with you that it is very provoking, and the more so, as we may not see her again until next winter, when the General has promised me to come and pass it with us in Town. But I wish you would shut the door, for I perceive that John has left it open.”

Sidney turned to obey his father, and discovered Cecil and Julia standing close behind him, anticipating his amazement.

His eyes sparkled, as he hastily grasped the hand of his little friend. "I would scold you," said he, "for this trick, but that I feel too happy in seeing you returned. It is but just, however, that you should indemnify me for the vexation you have given me." He then drew the blushing Julia towards him, and pressed his lips to her crimson cheek.

"It is very fair, my sweet girl," cried the Viscount, "and you may rejoice at escaping so easily; but now, Sidney, I must inform you, that my worthy old friend the General would not have parted with his daughter, had it not been for that very eloquence which you just now doubted the power of. I think I may safely say, that neither the General nor Mrs. Aveland would have allowed Julia to return with any body but myself."

"It is perfectly true," said Henry. "I always thought myself a great favourite of his, but he nevertheless denied my request. My father, however, can never plead in vain, and our dear friend is to stay with us until we remove to the Ab-

hey, nay, I half suspect that we shall be able to prevail on the General and her mother to accompany us there this summer."

"Oh! I hope they will," exclaimed Mrs. Fortescue, "for it is so dull a place, that unless Julia goes with us, I shall delay our departure as long as possible."

Although Miss Aveland felt grateful for the partiality of Mrs. Fortescue, yet it pained her to see the pensive expression of Henry's features on this speech of his wife. Nothing but her regard for Julia could have taken Mrs. Fortescue from London at that time of the year. She had such a dislike to the calm and tranquil life they led at the Abbey, that she felt her repugnance to return to it increase daily; and had she dared propose such a thing, she would gladly have declined ever entering it again. The society of Miss Aveland, to whom she was particularly attached, afforded her, however, an agreeable prospect of amusement: she expected to be confined in October, and had prevailed upon her husband to consent to her returning to Town the latter end of September, that her

accouchement might take place at the Viscount's Town-house. She therefore endeavoured to keep up her spirits, and only regretted that she was prohibited from visiting Lady Elvira Wrottesley, who she imagined might pass part of the summer at the Castle.

Determined to indemnify herself for the retirement of the Abbey, Mrs. Fortescue mixed more than ever in the fashionable amusements of the season ; and, contrary to the entreaties of Henry, and the advice of her physician, danced with as much spirit and vivacity as usual, regardless of her present situation and the fears of her family. The paleness of her cheek, and the languor of her appearance, however, alarmed both her husband and the Viscount.

“ My dearest Lucinda,” said he, “ if the tenderness of Henry yields too implicitly to your wishes, it is my duty to exert the authority and advice of a parent. Your constitution is infinitely too delicate to bear this eternal round of dissipation. You have not passed one evening at home, un-

less to receive company; and Sir Walter assured me but yesterday that it was highly requisite you should abstain from dancing, and that change of air would be of great service to you."

"I am very well, my dear uncle, if Sir Walter would be less officious. If he knew how I detest the country, he would never prescribe that as a remedy for any complaint of mine."

"My dear niece," replied his lordship, affectionately taking her hand, "I do not wish to propose any thing to give you pain; but change of air, and occasional tranquillity, may be procured without your wholly absenting yourself from Town. Will you consent to pass a week or two at Sidney Lodge after Lady Arlington's music party? The distance is so short, that it is only a delightful morning's ride. The situation is beautiful, the society highly respectable; and as it is now the second of April, the country will begin to be inviting. Speak, my dear Lucinda; we will all accompany you, and make you as lively and as happy as we can."

Mrs. Fortescue, who really felt herself far from well, and who dreaded lest her uncle should propose returning to the Abbey, consented with a good grace to his wish, and agreed to make the Lodge her occasional residence until after the birthday. Henry, delighted by her readiness to oblige, tenderly embraced her, and the whole family expressed their satisfaction at this plan of the Viscount. Orders were immediately given to get the Lodge ready for their reception, and Robarts dispatched to see them executed.

At the Marchioness of Arlington's they met the friendly Duchess and her two daughters, who goodnaturedly expressed their pleasure at seeing Miss Aveland returned. Julia was leaning on the arm of Sidney, and looking extremely handsome. Lady Lucy viewed her with a scrutinizing eye, and a feeling very near akin to envy; yet her goodhumour prevailed. She recollected that she herself was destined to become the wife of another, and she kindly hoped that they might be happy together, if such were their mutual wishes.

Mrs. Fortescue in a despairing voice told the Duchess of her intended removal to the Lodge, and her Grace, in order to comfort her, promised to be one of the first to pay her a morning's visit.

"Ah!" cried Lady Clementina, half serious, half laughing, "with such a husband as your's, my dear Mrs. Fortescue, the country ought to possess a thousand charms."

Lady Angeline-De Courci, the Earl, and Lord Desmond, were now announced, and the Marquis, who was speaking to Henry and his sister, immediately flew forward to receive them. The glow of rapture which animated his features betrayed to the brother of Sidney his attachment. After leading them to his mother, he returned to Henry Fortescue, and in the fulness of his heart confirmed what his eyes had before discovered. He was likewise warm in the praises of Lord Desmond, and declared that he knew him to be one of the best creatures in the world. "I know of no man for whom I entertain so high a regard as his lordship," said the Marquis. "He

is the most accomplished nobleman of the present day."

Cecil's heart throbbed, and she felt interested for Lord Arlington in consequence of his friendship with the son of Lady Emma. They were now joined by Sidney, Miss Aveland, and Lady Arlington. "Pray, dear Miss Fortescue," said her ladyship, "exert your influence with your friend. I cannot prevail upon her to favour us with a display of her talents. Perhaps if you will accompany her she will consent."

"Do, dear Julia," whispered Sidney. "Believe me, I would not advise you to perform in so large an assembly, did I not feel assured of your perfect ability."

Cecil, almost as timid, yet joined her entreaties, anxious that her friend should be seen to every advantage by the De Courci family. Sidney now led her to the instrument, where Mrs. Fortescue presided, who played in a most masterly manner, while Cecil, Julia, and Sidney, sang a trio with considerable execution. A buz of

approbation ran through the room. Cecil modestly raised her head. Lady Angeline and her cousin stood behind her. The eyes of the latter spoke his warm praise of her performance, while Julia received the most flattering encouragements from Sidney and his brother.

Lady Angeline now took Mrs. Fortescue's place: her cousin and the Marquis stood at her side. A beautiful glow crimsoned her pensive face as she drew off her gloves and gave them to her admiring lover, who requested to hold them. Lord Desmond accompanied her in a duet: every one was enchanted by the richness of his voice; and the soft and silver tones of her ladyship, who displayed great taste and feeling in the execution of a fine Irish melody.

Blushing still deeper, from the praises she received, Lady Angeline rose hastily, and by mistake took the arm of the Marquis instead of her cousin's. A thrill of ecstasy ran through the frame of Lord Arlington. He passionately pressed her hand,

which she immediately drew back, and with an embarrassed air accounted for what she had done.

“My dear Desmond,” said the Marquis, sighing deeply as he resigned the lovely Lady Angeline, “you are the most enviable of mortals. Would to heaven that I dared aspire to such a preference!”

“At least,” replied the cousin of her ladyship, “my friend shall share with me the happiness of Angeline’s society.” He took the arm of the Marquis, and sauntered through the splendid apartments of his mother in search of Lady Elvira. Like a brilliant star she met their view, and, as usual, eclipsed all the other beauties which were there assembled.

“You should have arrived sooner, my dear Elvira,” said Lord Desmond; “you would then have enjoyed a treat indeed. The eldest son of Lord Fortescue, his sister, and a Miss Aveland, have sung a most delightful trio. I wish you had heard them. Their voices were beautiful.”

At that instant the chords of a harp caught their ear, and they hastened for-

ward. Lady Elvira's heart filled with envy when she beheld the slight and graceful form of Julia Aveland displayed to the utmost advantage, as she touched with her white hands the harp, in accompaniment to her own voice, while Sidney hung over, and encouraged her with looks of admiration and affection.

Lady Elvira alone was silent. She turned scornfully from the group which surrounded Miss Aveland, and joined the daughters of the Duchess of Aimhigh. "It may be my want of taste," said she, "but I do not agree in the general opinion. I think very little of Miss Aveland's performances; and her voice appears to be quite an artificial one."

"Hush!" cried Lady Lucy: "don't let any body hear you say so, my dear friend, for all the connoisseurs in music that are here declare Miss Aveland a capital performer. I am sure that I never heard so sweet a voice, unless it is your sister's."

"Without doubt," replied Lady Clementina, "your ladyship is only quizzing us. I was perfectly enchanted by the trio

she sang with Sidney and Miss Fortescue. I have been trying to prevail on Henry to accompany me in a duet, but he tells me that he cannot sing to-night. Come, Lucy, if you will sing, I will take Miss Aveland's place."

Lady Elvira, for the first time, felt mortified that she was not a performer. She would have given a great deal to have been able to sing or play like Miss Aveland, whom she secretly acknowledged deserved all the praises she received. She would then also have had an opportunity of exciting the admiration of Sidney, of securing his notice. Lost in thought, she heard not the pleasing performances of her friends. The voice of her mother alone roused her from her reverie.

"I am not ashamed of my girls," said her Grace: "but come with me, I want to introduce you to a great favourite of mine, although she disappointed me in refusing a very eligible offer which I had secured for her." She then conducted her ladyship towards a tall, elegant young woman, whose expressive eyes were tenderly fixed

on the countenance of a gentleman on whose arm she was leaning. The Duchess introduced her to Mr. and Mrs. Neville, and after a short conversation passed on.

“That was truly a love-match,” said her Grace, “for interest or worldly prudence had nothing to do with it. Mrs. Neville is the eldest daughter of Lord P—; her husband, who I believe is a very worthy fellow, officiated as domestic chaplain and tutor to her brothers. The young people grew attached to each other. All hopes of gaining the consent of his lordship were vain; they eloped, and were married. Lord P— refused to see them, alleging that the example would be a dangerous one for his other daughters. A considerable time elapsed, during which many overtures were made towards a reconciliation: he has at last forgiven them, and this is the first time of their appearing in public since their union. It would not do for me to countenance such imprudent matches; but I may own to your ladyship that I rejoice to hear his lordship has received them into favour. They look so happy,

and so fond of each other, that I declare it makes me delighted to see them." Her Grace then quitted her to speak to the Duke of Auburn, who had just joined Lady Clementina.

The eyes of Lady Elvira rapidly sought after Sidney : her heart sickened on discovering him still attached to the side of Miss Aveland : Mr. and Mrs. Neville passed by her, and added to her chagrin. " Had I consulted my own heart," thought her ladyship, " I too should have married for love. Oh ! Sidney, never did I suppose my affection so strong, or your's so weak, that you could so easily transfer it to another." Then recollecting that herself had set the example, she ceased to accuse him of inconstancy, but more than ever felt determined to draw him from Miss Aveland. From the Duchess she heard of the intended removal of the Fortescue family, and resolved not to be long behind them. Her ladyship was, perhaps, the only discontented person at the Marchioness's : every face but her's appeared in harmony with the entertainment, while

the brilliancy of her perfect features were damped by the envy and self-reproach of her heart.

Lord Desmond and Cecil had exchanged a few words, and the former had dared to press her hand, while his eyes betrayed the feelings of his soul. Julia was delighted by the encomiums and kind attentions of Sidney, who seldom quitted her, and who evidently paid to her beauty and talents the homage they so justly deserved. With trembling apprehension she watched the all-beautiful Lady Elvira Wrottesley: she saw the increasing gloom of her faultless countenance, and felt convinced that she was every way unworthy either the love of Sidney or that of the amiable and unsuspecting son of Lord Dorrington.

Sidney's features remained tranquil, even after encountering the magical eyes of her ladyship; and Julia allowed herself to believe that her reign was compleatly over, that she was no longer an object of danger. Her own innocence of mind kept her in happy ignorance of the artifices and schemes of which the perfidious and de-

signing Lady Elvira was an adept. Base as she thought her, yet she little supposed that she was capable of coolly determining to endanger the honour of her husband, whose peace of mind depended solely upon her affection and prudence. The discontent which her face betrayed too plainly discovered that the son of the Viscount was not so wholly indifferent to her ladyship as in fact he ought to be; and Julia felt a sentiment of pity steal into her gentle bosom, which was, however, checked by the remembrance of Sidney's former distress.

Mrs. Fortescue, who had contributed greatly to the amusement of the company, vainly endeavoured to prevail on her husband to display his fine voice. Lady Clementina, who had escaped from the Duke of Auburn, now joined in entreating him to make one in a quartetto, in which his sister, herself, and Lady Angeline, would accompany him.

"Come," said she, taking his arm, "you shall not refuse me, I am determined: we all know your power of fasci-

nating the soul, and it is cruel of you to deny us so delightful a pleasure." Determined not to be conquered, Lady Clementina led him triumphantly towards the circle round the instrument. " See," cried her ladyship, " if I have not cause to exult : he has yielded to my persuasions, and I am half inclined to rally Mrs. Fortescue upon my success."

Lady Angeline timidly raised her eyes as she found herself placed between Henry and the Marquis of Arlington. She had to begin a fine Italian quartetto, which breathed of love, and all its dear felicities. She trembled, and only received courage as she was joined by the other voices. If Lady Angeline felt embarrassed by finding herself so near to the son of the Viscount, he was not less so : every succeeding interview only increased the esteem which he had felt for her ladyship at first sight. She appeared the very being formed to suit his romantic taste and disposition ; yet the admiration she inspired robbed not his wife of one particle of his affection. The love he had borne Lucinda from his childhood

remained the same; it was steady and uniform; it was that of an affectionate brother for a deserving sister: but his heart had discovered in the root-house of the lake that it was capable of feeling a more ardent passion. It had once thrilled with rapture at the touch of a soft and delicate hand, at the glance of a grateful blue eye, at the sound of a sweet voice pouring forth the expressions of artless thanks, while the form and features of an angel seemed presented to his view, to try the strength of his filial duty, the honour of his principles.

Henry proved worthy of the trial. Keenly alive to the merits, beauty, and virtue of Lady Angeline, he remembered his engagements to his cousin, his father's solemn prohibition, and gained the ascendancy over the momentary weakness of his heart.

Mrs. Fortescue now complained of fatigue, and to the surprise of her husband, intimated a wish to retire early. So new a request alarmed his tenderness, and when at home, he earnestly besought her to re-

turn as soon as possible to the tranquil scenes of the Lodge. All joined in this request, and Mrs. Fortescue agreed to go there the next day.

The mildness of the weather had already shed its influence over the grounds of Sidney Lodge: the trees were beginning to bud; and a variety of spring flowers were in blossom. Henry gathered a bunch of early violets, and carried them to his wife the morning after their arrival, and regretted to find that she was still in bed, while he had been enjoying the beauty of the morning with his sister, Sidney, and Miss Aveland. She kissed his hand affectionately as she received them, but declared that she should never be able to conquer her dislike to early rising. Henry sighed as he gazed on her pale cheek. The sigh did honour to his feelings; it was prompted by the kindest concern for her health and happiness, the former of which he beheld daily yielding to her excessive love of dissipation.

The calm regularity of the Lodge, the tender attentions of her husband and the

whole family, again brought the rose on the fair cheek of Mrs. Fortescue : she owned that she had felt herself very unwell, now that she found herself considerably better from a week's residence at the Lodge.

The Duchess and her unmarried daughters had called upon them, and expressed their admiration of the Viscount's taste, and the romantic beauty of the house ; at the same time rallying his lordship on his secluding himself so constantly from all the gay parties of London.

“ Could any thing tempt me to swerve from my fixed determination,” replied Lord Fortescue, “ it would be the persuasions of your Grace. I am well aware, that in denying myself the pleasure of making one at your hospitable board I alone am the sufferer ; but I know your goodness will make allowance for my private feelings.”

“ You must not trust too much to my goodness,” said the Duchess, “ for I am so confident of the loss we sustain by your absenting yourself as you do, that I often

feel strongly inclined to come and take you by storm, and carry you away whether you will or not."

The Viscount smiled, and asked her Grace to walk with him round the garden. "With all my heart," said she joyfully, pleased that the long wished for opportunity had come at last. "You young people can amuse yourselves very well without us old folks, therefore I desire that you will not follow us." Then taking the arm of the Viscount, she accompanied him over the beautiful grounds of the Lodge.

With the kindest intention in the world, her Grace judiciously sought a favourable moment to bring up the name of De Courci, and to express her sincere regret that the young people of each family were denied the gratification of associating with each other. The deep gloom which overspread the before smiling features of the Viscount made her afraid to proceed; she however ventured to say, that the family circle of the Earl was truly amiable and interesting; that his nieces were lovely young women; that Lady Desmond was

almost as great a recluse as himself, and that her son was one of the best creatures in the world.

At the mention of Lady Desmond's name the angry brow of Lord Fortescue relaxed a little ; his countenance assumed the hue of sorrow and still unsubdued affection, while her Grace felt his arm on which she leaned tremble violently.

" I cannot feel offended at your Grace," said the Viscount, " because I am aware of the kindness of your intention : be assured, however, that my family can never visit that of Lord De Courci, and I must beg your Grace will not again mention so disagreeable a subject."

Disappointed, the goodnatured Duchess felt sorry that she had caused Lord Fortescue any disquietude ; yet she could not help enjoying a lurking hope that he might yet be brought to forget and forgive, should her plot succeed : and with such an auxiliary as Lady Elvira Wrottesley she did not doubt of its taking place. Before her departure, she contrived to whisper to Mrs. Fortescue that the Villa was taken

by Mr. Wrottesley, and that Lady Elvira would be down in a day or two. "Say not a word of the matter," said she. "I have a plan in agitation to re-unite the two families, which I will tell you when I call again."

Mrs. Fortescue, notwithstanding the "say not a word of the matter," told Cecil and Julia of the singularity there appeared to be in Lady Elvira's taking a house so close to their residence. She added, that she dare say her ladyship would be glad if the animosity which still subsisted between the heads of each family could possibly be done away. "I am sure that I should," said she, "for I never wished for any thing more earnestly, and yet I am afraid that my wish will never be gratified."

Cecil and Miss Aveland, when they were alone, mutually expressed their regret at this intelligence; and Julia agreed that her ladyship must have an astonishing deal of effrontery to take the Villa, which was so near the house of her former lover. "We will tell Sidney, that he may not be

taken by surprise," said his sister. "I know not why, but this information has cast a damp on my spirits: I begin to fear this Lady Elvira. Come with me, Julia, and we will go to my brother's apartments."

She tapped at his door, and inquired if he would admit a couple of intruders. Sidney opened it, and taking a hand of each, affectionately led them to a couch, and placed himself between them; then asked how he came to be so highly honoured as to receive a visit from two ladies in his own apartments. Julia blushed and cast down her eyes, while Cecil communicated to him the news which had given her so much uneasiness.

"I cannot endure that Lady Elvira," said she; "and I feel quite unhappy, my dear Sidney, that so worthless, so bold a woman should reside near us. I am at a loss to account for my fears; but I am certain that she has a design in thus obtruding herself on your notice. I wish we were at the Abbey."

"What do you fear, my beloved Ce-

cil?" inquired Sidney, as he kissed her blooming cheek. "You are not aware, my dear girl, that your very kindness is a reproach to me. Do you think me capable of being drawn aside from the paths of honour and morality, even if enticed to err by the faultless form of that imprudent, that fickle-minded woman? Do not fear for me, dearest Cecil: I am not quite so weak as you imagine. What does my sweet little friend say to this bugbear of Cecil's fancy?"

Julia coloured and felt confused; she knew not what to say. "I see," cried Sidney, "that my sister has infected you with her fears, and that in truth you both have made up your minds to believe that some terrible thing, an elopement for instance, will happen from her residing so near the Lodge."

"Oh! no indeed," said Miss Aveland, "you are quite wrong: neither Cecil nor myself could harbour such a dreadful idea for an instant, but we both of us think Lady Elvira very imprudent, perhaps indelicate, in her conduct."

“ Dear Julia,” replied Sidney, “ I perfectly agree with you in this opinion, yet she may not be so censurable as you both imagine, at least in this case, for Mr. Wrottesley may have been the principal one concerned in taking of the Villa, and her ladyship may feel as little inclined to reside in it as you are that she should be so near to you. I am sorry, however, that it has happened, more on your account than my own, for I shall not be unwilling to convince her if necessary that she no longer retains any power over my heart or its affections.”

“ Oh ! my brother,” said Cecil, embracing him tenderly, “ I hope not. I hope you think of her as I do ; but I feel convinced that she will endeavour to fascinate you once more ; and I have read that a bad woman is the most dangerous of all beings. I would not have you walk in the serpentine shrubbery which divides the two gardens ; and I declare I will never allow myself that pleasure while she remains at the Villa.”

“ Dearest Cecil,” replied Sidney, laugh-

ing as he spoke, " I did not suppose you capable of such extreme folly ; why, what a coward would you have me turn, never to enjoy one of the sweetest walks in my garden, because it is close to that of the formidable enchantress Elvira. One would really think, my dear sister, that her ladyship possessed the power given to the ideal fairy-race, and that she would simply by a look, for touch me she cannot, unless she break through the hedge, transform me into some frightful creature, or venomous reptile. Dear Cecil, such weakness is unworthy of you. Trust me, that I shall neither seek Lady Elvira, nor avoid the shrubbery-walk ; my own honour will be sufficient to guard me against her allurements."

His sister and Julia left him, however, with unquiet minds : they strolled through the serpentine walk, and noticed to each other the very slender division there was to separate the two gardens. By putting aside the branches of a laurel-hedge, they could easily discover any person in the grounds of the Villa. Neither Miss Fortes-

cue nor her friend suspected Lady Elvira of any other motive than that of again seeking to draw forth the attention of Sidney, that she might have him amongst the list of her admirers: they were too pure themselves to attribute to her any thing else than a feeling of mortified vanity at his apparent indifference, while Sidney himself felt a strange mixture of emotions at the idea of Lady Elvira's living so close to him, at the certainty of frequently beholding her, unless indeed he took the advice of his sister, and shunned the serpentine shrubbery. His vanity for a moment started the possibility that he might yet be dear to her; that in rashly uniting herself to Mr. Wrottesley she had sacrificed her own peace with his, and that she still loved him. Blushing at the weakness which gave birth to this idea, he instantly rejected it, and called to mind her infidelity, her abandonment of himself, and without being compelled to do so. Pride took possession of his heart, and indignation alone remained. "All beautiful as she is," thought he, "she shall not again enslave me. I am free, free

I will remain, nor ever again enter myself among the number of her admirers."

Alas! how short-sighted is human nature! at the very moment when it thinks itself most secure, it too frequently happens that it is most in danger. Such was Sidney's case: he relied upon his own integrity, his own strength, not imagining that it was the determination of Lady Elvira to put them both to the utmost test.

CHAPTER VII.

CONTRARY to her inclinations, Lady Elvira was detained in Town ten days later than she wished. With joy she ordered her carriage to Grosvenor Square the morning before her departure for the Villa, and found her uncle and all the family assembled in the drawing-room. By the expression of their countenances she judged that something unpleasant had occurred, and heard that her sister had just received a letter from Lady Mary De Courci, with the melancholy intelligence that Lord Reginald was dangerously ill.

Pride and paternal tenderness struggled hard in the breast of Lord De Courci, and he paced the room with an agitation which called forth the tears of his sister and Lady Angeline. Lord Desmond quitted them for a few minutes to give orders to his ser-

vant for four horses to be put to his chariot, and then returned.

“My dear uncle,” said he, respectfully, “I am going down to Dudley House: have you any words of consolation for my cousin? May I dare cheer him with the hope of being forgiven?”

Lord De Courci covered his face with his hand, while his sister took the other and pressed it to her lips. “Dearest brother, I mean to accompany Robert: let me be the messenger of peace. It is filial love which has at length brought your only son to the confines of the grave.—He cannot live under your displeasure. My brother, my dearest Reginald, let me not plead in vain.”

Lady Angeline rose and flung herself at the feet of the Earl, while her sister, melted by the distress, of those she loved, hung over the back of her uncle’s chair, and sobbed aloud.

“Dearest uncle,” said Lady Angeline, in a voice of angelic sweetness—“dearest uncle, forgive my cousin: accompany my aunt and Robert—save him from an early

grave. He will die, unless you pardon this sole act of disobedience."

The voice, the tears, the attitude of Lady Angeline, forcibly affected her uncle: he stooped to raise her from her kneeling posture, his tears mingled with her's. All anxiously waited the event of her entreaties.

"Grant my request, dear uncle," continued Lady Angeline. "In such a cause let me not plead in vain. I cannot rise until you promise to forgive my dear cousin. To err is the lot of humanity, but to forgive is the attribute of the Deity. Oh! I see you will forgive him," cried she, rising and throwing herself into his arms. "My dear uncle will fly to save his son, to assure him of his love."

Lord De Courci strained her to his bosom; but he perceived not immediately that she had fainted from the sudden rush of joy which the yielding features of her uncle gave birth to. Soon, however, she recovered at the delightful sound of his voice, which tenderly assured her that her request was granted: then embracing his

sister and eldest niece, he left them to give some orders preparatory to his departure.

With increased affection, Lady Desmond embraced her youngest niece. "The victory is your's, Angeline: your sweet pleadings, your persuasive eloquence of voice and manner, subdued the heart of your uncle. I shall go with him and Robert, and hope soon to return with the beloved penitent and his amiable Mary. Let Phœbe attend you, my dear girl, while you are with your sister, and remember me kindly to the Marquis."

She then quitted them to get ready for her journey, and Lady Elvira proposed that her sister should accompany her home: to this Lady Angeline objected, but promised to be with her at the dinner-hour. With the most exquisite delight her ladyship wrote a few lines to Lady Mary, expressive of her affection for her and her husband, and gave them to Lord Desmond to deliver. The tears of generous rapture filled her lovely eyes as she saw them enter the travelling carriage of the Earl, and she returned into the drawing-room with sensations of the purest happiness.

Lady Elvira soon left her to her own meditations, conjuring her to come as early as possible.

When alone, Lady Angeline gave way to the emotions of heartfelt pleasure : she had been accessory to restoring her cousin to the affections of his father, and she enjoyed a felicity as pure as her own heart : she anticipated the joyful meeting, the long wished for pardon, and the recovery and happiness of Lord Reginald and his wife. Lost in blissful ideas, she heard not the opening of the door, until the sound of Lord Arlington's voice awakened her to different reflections.

The tear yet trembled in her sweet blue eye, while a blush of the finest pink added to the interestingness of her appearance. Tenderly taking her hand, the Marquis inquired after the family, and heard the joyful occasion of their absence. The state of her feelings made her more free and unreserved, and his lordship gazed on her with an admiration he could no longer repress.

“ Dearest Lady Angeline,” said he, respectfully kissing her hand, “ how I sym-

pathize in your present feelings! how I rejoice to see you thus animated, thus happy! Oh! that you would but condescend to allow me to hope that my peace of mind, my future happiness, which depends solely on yourself, is not wholly indifferent to you!" He flung himself at her feet. "Beloved Lady Angeline, I know not how I have assumed courage to avow my long cherished love, my faithful passion. Thrown off my guard by the sweet expression of your features, I now venture to solicit your candid reply to my presumptuous hopes—presumptuous they are, as I have dared to aspire to the glory of possessing a heart such as your's."

The natural loveliness of Lady Angeline was now heightened by the blush of modesty. At her feet knelt one of the most amiable, of the most accomplished noblemen of the age. No fault could she find either with his person, his manners, or his principles; yet her heart secretly refused to return his love. Confused, and trembling at the idea of giving pain to so worthy an object, yet determined not to encourage

his hopes, she so delicately softened down her rejection of the amiable Marquis, that he knew not whether to hope or despair.

“ Angelic creature !” he replied, “ were it possible that my admiration could increase, it would receive an addition by the enchanting manner in which you lament your inability to return my love. Dearest and best beloved, allow me to hope that time may render your bosom more congenial to my wishes. Your heart is yet unengaged. Perhaps my endeavours may render me more deserving your notice. Oh! could I but hope to gain the treasure of your affection, I should think no peril or danger too great to be rewarded with your heart.”

“ My esteem, my warmest friendship, you will ever possess; my lord,” said Lady Angeline, “ but that would not be a fit recompence for the affection you honour me with. A heart such as your’s, my lord, deserves the tenderest return of reciprocal love ; and I should be base indeed, if I did not acknowledge that mine is not capable of feeling that attachment which you are so well calculated to inspire.”

“ Let me, at least, cherish the hope,” returned the Marquis, “ that time may produce a change in my favour. Suffer me also to entreat, that, as my adoration shall never offend you with ceaseless importunities, you will behave to me as usual : let me aspire to the bliss of calling you friend, if I fail of procuring a dearer claim to your heart.”

Tenderly pressing her hand to his lips, he left her ; while his fine and eloquent black eyes unintentionally reproached her for her insensibility to his merits. Strange as it may appear, Lady Angeline was not insensible to his attractions, or indifferent to his distress ; but her conduct was actuated by that delicacy of mind which regulated all her actions. Had she never seen Henry Fortescue, the Marquis would have been the object of her choice ; but so refined were her ideas, so chaste her feelings, that although she felt no sentiment for Henry that need call a blush into her cheek, yet she could not, consistently with her own notions of propriety, bestow her hand on the Marquis, while her heart felt

moved by the sound of another's name, or while she found herself unable to part with the volume of Petrarch, or the little sprig of myrtle which she had broken off from one of Henry's trees at the Abbey. With care she had planted it on her return to the Castle ; when she removed, she brought it with her to Town ; and, as if to reward her attention, it had taken root, and become a flourishing little tree.

Innocent, and free from guile as the smiling infant at the breast of its mother, Lady Angeline had never felt a wish relating to the son of Lord Fortescue which his wife would have disapproved of : yet she could not relinquish the volume or the myrtle ; and, therefore, her heart told her that she was incapable of returning the ardent attachment of the deserving Marquis, while it deeply regretted that so amiable an object should be destined to suffer the pangs of a hopeless passion.

At the dinner-table of her sister Lady Angeline again met the Marquis of Arlington : she coloured deeply, but the delicacy of his deportment soon relieved her from

her embarrassment, and Herbert Wrottesley, to her satisfaction, placed himself by her side.

“To-morrow,” said Mr. Wrottesley, “we shall remove to Lord Winterton’s delightful villa, where we intend occasionally to reside until after the birth-day. I shall expect, my lord, that you will favour us sometimes with your company: we shall always have a bed at your service. Angelina and Herbert go with us; and when Lord De Courci returns, he has promised, with the rest of his family, to pass a week or two with us at the Villa: we shall then be able to amuse you with some family concerts, which will be an inducement for you to visit us.”

“Fond as I am of music,” replied his lordship, “I need no such inducement, my dear Wrottesley, to make one at your table. I shall joyfully accept your kind invitation, and be happy to contribute, by my poor abilities, to your amusements.”

“I hope,” said Mr. Wrottesley, “that we shall soon receive an agreeable addition to our little circle. Lord De Courci, his

sister, and Lord Desmond, are gone to bestow pardon and peace to an only son, who unfortunately incurred the resentment of the Earl, by a hasty and imprudent marriage. Elvira tells me that Angeline has the merit of subduing the wounded pride of his lordship, and softening his heart towards his son. Had the Earl resisted such a pleader, he must have been more than man."

"He must, indeed," said the Marquis, emphatically, while the fair object of their praise sat with her eyes fixed on the fruit which Herbert had just handed her, but which she had not touched.

"I wish to God," continued Mr. Wrottesley, "that my dear sister would exert her eloquence in another cause, and soften the resentment of her uncle and Lord Foretscue. An hereditary animosity subsists between them, and I am compelled to unwillingly become a party concerned, while my heart is strongly interested for the family of the Viscount, and I would give anything to be at liberty to solicit their friendship."

“ They are worthy of it,” replied the Marquis ; “ two more amiable young men cannot exist. I am not on visiting terms with their father, who is a great recluse ; but I intend to cultivate more assiduously their friendship. Unluckily I was engaged each time of Mrs. Fortescue’s routs : I mean, however, to attend her next party. She is a pretty dashing little woman, but I should not have supposed her to have been Henry’s own choice.”

“ The Villa,” said Mr. Wrottesley, “ is close to Sidney Lodge, which belongs to the Viscount’s eldest son ; it is not improbable, therefore, that your lordship may see some of the family when you favour us with your company.”

None noticed the sudden start of Lady Angeline at this intelligence except her sister ; she, however, hastily turned aside her head, not venturing to encounter the eyes of her ladyship.

“ I cannot follow the impulse of my own inclination,” continued Mr. Wrottesley ; “ but your lordship may have an opportunity of expressing to the sons of the Vis-

count my extreme regret at the unfortunate difference which prevents my testifying personally the esteem I feel for them."

"You may depend on my doing so," said the Marquis. "I may safely assure you of their inclinations being congenial with your own; and I only wish that I possessed some of the far-famed water of Lethe, to present some of it to the Viscount and the Earl."

Lady Angeline was so surprised by the idea of her sister's consenting to Everard's taking a house any way near to one belonging to Sidney or his family, that she could with difficulty conceal her feelings: shocked at the indelicacy of her strange conduct, she, on their retiring from the dining-parlour, noticed it to Lady Elvira, who, on her part, felt embarrassed by the strict delicacy and propriety of her sister's ideas, and was obliged to have recourse to a falsehood, in order to escape her just reproof. She, therefore, said the Villa was taken by Mr. Wrottesley before she knew to whom the Lodge belonged, and that any after objection of her's would appear

singular, and, perhaps, raise his suspicions.

This excuse gave relief to the amiable Lady Angeline, who, on the return of the gentlemen, found herself sufficiently recovered from the disagreeable surprise to accompany the Marquis in some beautiful duets; while the trembling softness of his voice, the languishing tenderness of his eyes, convinced his hearers how well his own feelings corresponded with those of the poet and the musician.

Immediately after breakfast the next morning the family set off for the Villa; Phœbe Meynel accompanying Lady Angeline, according to the desire of Lady Desmond. The house was picturesquely situated, and fitted up with great taste and magnificence: the whole delighted Lady Angeline, and she was not at all surprised that her brother-in-law should so hastily have agreed for it with Lord Winterton. They walked round the grounds, which were laid out with considerable judgment and expence. Mr. Wrottesley pointed out to her the Lodge of Sidney, which, from

its elegance of structure, formed a pleasing object in the view. Lady Angeline gazed on its pale yellow walls, partly covered with ivy, honeysuckle, and jessamine, with a mixture of pleasure and of pain: she sighed as she perceived the very slender division of the grounds, and determined secretly, never, if possible, to obtrude herself on the notice of the family: while the eyes of her sister sparkled with anticipated delight, her bosom filled with hope and expectation, at being so near the abode of her former lover. She rose earlier than usual, under the pretence of wishing to enjoy the purity of the morning air, and, with her sister, walked in the garden, or round a fine paddock, which belonged to the Villa; but she could not entice Lady Angeline to pass through the nut-walk which joined the grounds of the Lodge.

Secretly pleased to find that her sister seriously meant to avoid that walk, Lady Elvira desisted from her persuasions, and seemed to agree in the justness of her refusal. After breakfast her ladyship generally passed several hours alone, her sister

being occupied either in the music-room, or at her studies in her own apartment. Mr. Wrottesley and his brother usually went to Town before dinner, or rode out with the Marquis, who availed himself, as early as possible, of his kind invitation.

Lord Arlington now became the companion of their morning rambles, and struck by the apparent prettiness of the nut-walk, (for so it was called from its having a number of filbert trees mixed with the ever-greens and other shrubs), he expressed a desire to see it. Lady Elvira readily assented; her sister, however, withdrawing her arm, declined accompanying them. The Marquis was therefore on the point of turning back; but Lady Elvira, laughingly, drew him forward, and shewed him the lodge belonging to the Viscount's son.

“Angeline is such a strange girl,” said her ladyship, “that I frequently think she will die an old maid; her ideas are so prudish, indeed, I may say so ridiculous, for one of her age. Do you know that she has determined never to enter this walk, merely because there is a chance of seeing

some of the Viscount's family, and she has taken it into her head to think that it will appear indelicate on our part, to seem at all desirous of any intimacy with them."

The sound of footsteps near them prevented the reply of the Marquis. They were just passing a small green gate which led into the next garden, and which discovered to them Henry and his sister, taking their accustomed walk. The Marquis bowed; they returned his salute, and passed onward. Lady Elvira felt unwilling to encounter the eyes of Henry or Cecil, and therefore kept her own fixed on the ground. On the lawn they were joined by Lady Angeline, who rejoiced when she heard who they had seen that she had not been enticed to break through her resolution.

Miss Fortescue failed not to inform her friend of having seen Lady Elvira, while Henry openly expressed his contempt and indignation at her imprudence and boldness, at the same time he could not help passing a just tribute to the modesty of her sister, in shunning a walk in which

she would be certain of seeing his family, were they in the shrubbery.

Sidney joined in thinking that Lady Elvira's conduct betrayed strongly the unworthiness of her heart; yet he found himself irresistibly drawn towards the spot where it was probable he might behold her, curious to discover how she would act in case of seeing him alone. All his family were occupied in their own chambers, and Sidney bent his steps towards the serpentine shrubbery.

Lady Elvira naturally concluded that Henry would inform his brother of her arrival at the Villa: anxious to know what effect it would have upon the mind of Sidney, she determined after breakfast to take a solitary stroll, should the gentlemen order their horses for Town. It happened as she wished. Lady Angeline retired to write letters to Dudley House; and her ladyship, after first consulting her glass, which informed her she was more beautiful than ever, directed her steps to the nut-walk.

Breathless with expectation, she flew

towards the little gate : she bent over it with trembling anxiety, as she hoped Sidney was there. Gratified pride and joy crimsoned her cheek : she hastily withdrew her head, but not before he had caught a glimpse of features once so dear to him.

By a natural impulse Sidney quickened his pace. The laurel-hedge hid her ladyship from his view ; yet they were opposite to each other. Both paused—Lady Elvira sighed deeply, and broke off one of the branches.

“ Shall I not remind her of her infidelity ? ” thought he. “ No, rather let me fly from the magic of her charms, nor rashly trust too much my own strength.”

He turned to repass the gate. Lady Elvira was there before him. Sidney paused for a moment. His soul melted as he gazed on her exquisite form, her beautiful face. By a strong effort of all his reason he would have flown, had not his name, pronounced in the tenderest tone of voice, riveted him to the spot.

Unconsciously he went to the gate. Lady Elvira took his hand, and pressed it to

her lips. Her eyes filled with tears; her bosom throbbed with violence through the lace which but ill concealed it.

“ Say but that you forgive me, Sidney,” said her ladyship, again pressing his hand to her lips : “ say but that you pity the misery my own rashness has brought upon me. Do not hate me, for I hate myself.”

She leaned against the gate. Her sobs were audible : they subdued the resentment of Sidney. He unfastened the gate which separated them, and caught her passionately to his heart.

“ Am I awake,” said he, still pressing her luxurious person in his arms, “ or do I dream? Does then Elvira repent her infidelity? Does her heart still beat with fondness for the man she abandoned? Oh! Elvira, once adored, once idolized, am I then still dear to you?”

“ Alas!” replied the beautiful enchantress, “ it is vain to deny that you alone possess my affection. Yes, dearest Sidney, too late have I discovered that in resigning you I resigned all that was valuable in this life.”

Sidney was no longer master of himself: his arms enfolded one of the most lovely, the most fascinating of women; his eyes beheld the finest features in the world, softened by the most languishing tenderness; and he heard the object of his first and dearest affections confess that in resigning him she had rendered herself wretched.

Prudence, religion, honour, and morality, all were forgotten, and he alone remembered that his lips were pressed to those of the beautiful Elvira—that his head rested on the downy pillow of her throbbing bosom.

Short, however, were the triumphs of passion. The native rectitude of his principles, the native honour of his soul, resumed their empire.

Sidney receded from the snowy arms of Lady Elvira. A deep blush overspread his handsome countenance. His eyes were cast on the ground, as the chaste image of his little friend passed across his mind.

“How dearly I once loved you, Lady Elvira, it is useless to remind you—how sacredly I would have kept the oath of

constancy given in the root-house of the lake, Heaven can bear witness. I forgive your cruel desertion, your cruel perjury; but your honour, my own, and that of your husband, forbids our meeting again."

He hastily fled, leaving her ladyship almost motionless at his so soon recovering his reason and self-command. She closed the gate.

"And is it thus," thought she, "that my weakness is rewarded?—Is it thus that Sidney shakes off the power of my beauty, and flies from my arms at a moment when my whole soul was dissolved in tenderness for him? Oh! Sidney, Sidney, with what rapture would I now, were I able, ratify my given word; with what ecstasy would I devote my whole life to thy service!"

Absorbed, mortified, and ashamed at the guilty part she had just acted, Lady Elvira slowly returned to the house, and to her chamber. Tears of anguish rolled down her lovely cheeks, and her heart, not yet inured to shame, severely reproached her for the scene of the morning.

Sidney, on his quitting her ladyship, retired to his room, agitated, and angry at his having yielded even for a moment to the impulse of passion. He unlocked his writing-case with an intention of calming his mind by finishing a Greek translation.

The moss-rose bud which had once rested on the pure bosom of Julia Aveland, and which Sidney had taken from her on presenting her with the lilies of the valley, now met his eye. He involuntarily started at the idea of his own inferiority: the case was closed, and he went to the apartment of his sister.

Julia was there alone, Cecil having been sent for by Mrs. Fortescue, who was extremely nervous and unwell. The enchanting smile which she bestowed on Sidney, the affectionate inquiry she made after his health (for his looks plainly bespoke a mind ill at ease), operated as a charm to his wounded spirits. He took her hand, and raising it to his lips, seated himself by her side.

“ You possess the delightful art of calming the turbulency of my feelings,” said he

in a grateful voice. "Dear Julia, were you always with me, I should be more amiable, more worthy your esteem."

A deep blush crimsoned her modest features, and her heart throbbed with unexpected rapture at this delicate compliment of Sidney.

"You little think how unworthy I am of your friendship," he continued, gazing on her lovely face, while the contrast between her blushing modesty, and the voluptuous freedom of Lady Elvira, struck him forcibly.

"Dearest Julia, if you knew all my weakness, my rashness, you would no longer call me your friend."

Miss Aveland raised her eyes affectionately to those of Sidney, and replied in a trembling but sweet voice, "Do not judge so severely of yourself, nor think my regard so light and volatile, that common errors would estrange it. My friendship is as durable as my—" love, she would have said, but delicacy forbade her.

Sidney, who had passionately loved, who had doated to madness on a faithless object,

read in the confusion, the blushes, the timid tenderness of Julia, the secret of her heart. He imprinted on her white hand a kiss of pure affection, unmixed by any of those violent feelings which had agitated him on pressing his lips to those of the matchless Lady Elvira.

“ When I am become more worthy of your good opinion, my sweet friend, I may perhaps aspire to a dearer claim to your gentle heart; at present I am at war with myself.”

The entrance of Cecil relieved Miss Aveland from the surprise, the sudden rush of pleasure which nearly overpowered her: and Sidney heard with considerable inquietude that Sir Walter had been sent for to attend Mrs. Fortescue, who, though faint, languid, and highly nervous, persisted in her intention of going to a ball given by Lady Arlington the latter end of May.

“ Good heavens !” cried Sidney, warmly, “ how can Lucinda be so imprudent as to wish such a thing in her present situation ! She will kill herself, unless she can be persuaded to act more cautiously.”

“ I am extremely uneasy about her,” replied Miss Fortescue, “ and Henry is quite unhappy, lest she should fall a victim to her love of pleasure. I wish, Sidney, you would go and console him.”

Her brother immediately obeyed, and Miss Aveland then repeated to her friend what had fallen from the lips of Sidney. Cecil embraced her exultingly.

“ Dearest Julia, I shall yet merit the title of prophetess: I shall yet see you the wife of our dear Sidney: None will rejoice at it more than my father: you are so great a favourite with him, that I begin to feel a little jealous upon the occasion; but let us go to Lucinda, and try to divert her mind from the ennui which oppresses it.”

Mrs. Fortescue was, indeed, an object which required all their kindness: she had been accustomed from a very early age to one constant scene of gaiety and dissipation, and she could not exist without it. Her constitution, naturally delicate, was considerably weakened by the life she led. Unable to wean herself from the diversions

of London, she sighed to find that her strength was insufficient to keep pace with her desires, and her spirits rapidly decreased as she discovered her inability to be so gay as usual. The Marchioness's ball was the last for the season : everybody would be there, and she was resolved to go, unless she was positively confined to her bed.

Sir Walter arrived, and seriously advised her to remain as tranquil as possible, and certainly to abstain from dancing. Mrs. Fortescue heard him, but her resolution remained unchanged ; while the Viscount, alarmed for her safety, led him into his private apartments, and entreated him to give his candid opinion respecting his patient. The physician assured his lordship that he did not consider Mrs. Fortescue in any danger, provided that she carefully adhered to the regimen he always prescribed in cases such as her's, where there were any symptoms of a decline.

At his departure, the Viscount rang for Robarts, to assist him in dressing for dinner. He rang twice before his summons was

attended to, a thing so unusual, that he was going to inquire the cause, had not the agitation of Robarts, who appeared hardly able to stand, awakened all the kindness of his master, who, fearing he was ill, told him he could do very well without his assistance.

“ I am not ill, my lord,” said Robarts, “ only greatly surprised, greatly overjoyed, by unexpectedly meeting with an old friend, who I never thought I should see again. I hope your lordship will excuse me, but it has made me tremble from head to foot.”

“ Indeed ! Robarts. I congratulate you upon such a joyful circumstance. Who can you have seen in this part of the world to agitate you thus ?”

“ One, my lord, who I had thought lost to me for ever; one that I loved dearer than all the world, except your lordship.”

Lord Fortescue started, and turned pale: then laying his hand on the shoulder of his affectionate domestic, he said, “ Robarts, you have seen Phœbe Meynel !”

“ I have, my lord,” replied his attendant, while the tears of affection and pleasure ran down his face. “ I have once more beheld my poor dear Phœbe: she is still single, still faithful, still loves me.”

The Viscount turned aside, to wipe away the tear of generous sympathy: he threw himself into a seat, and desired Robarts to sit down. “ Tell me,” said he, “ where you saw her, and who she now lives with.”

“ Oh, my dear lord! Phœbe can have but one mistress; Robarts but one master. I was passing by the Villa, little dreaming of who it contained, when I heard my own name pronounced by a voice which ran like lightning through my veins. I turned quickly round. I thought I should have dropped when I saw Phœbe standing at the gate of the paddock. ‘ Have you forgotten me?’ said she, bursting into tears. I soon found my strength and my reason return. I ran and caught her in my arms. ‘ Forgotten you!’ I cried; ‘ no, Phœbe! two-and-twenty years have you continued to

live in my heart. Forgotten you! Oh! I have scarce thought of any thing else.' Pardon me, my lord, I shall tire you with my joys."

"Go on, go on, my worthy fellow," replied the Viscount, still hiding his face. "I can enter into all your feelings."

"After our mutual transports had a little subsided," continued Robarts, "we told each other all that had passed since our separation. Phœbe still continues with her angel mistress; but while Lady Desmond is at Dudley House, she attends upon Lady Angeline De Courci, who is now on a visit to her sister at the Villa. Oh, my lord! to find my poor Phœbe still constant, after the lapse of so many years, was more than I had dared expect. It has overpowered me, and I hardly found myself able to leave her, now that I have once again found her."

"Happy, happy fellow!" exclaimed the Viscount. "Rest assured, my faithful Robarts, that I rejoice in your happiness; that I will do all I can to encrease it. But

tell me, did Phœbe mention any thing concerning her mistress; the family, I mean? How singular it appears that we should still be fated to reside near to them."

"She doats on the son of Lady Desmond," replied Robarts: "I thought she would never have done praising him; he is so kind, so gentle, so affectionate; just like his mother, who, you know, my lord, is an angel."

The Viscount groaned, and Robarts, recollecting himself, continued. "The only son of the Earl has incurred his heavy displeasure, by marrying, against his consent, the daughter of a private gentleman; and his father has ever since refused to see him, or even to hear his name mentioned. He has fretted himself almost to death's door, and is dangerously ill at the cottage of his wife's mother, near his father's country-seat. Thank God, they are all, except Lady Angeline, gone down to forgive the poor dear young lord, who I hope will recover, and be happy; for Phœbe says he

is one of the best creatures in the world. Mr. Wrottesley, who has taken the Villa, is married to the Earl's eldest niece ; and her sister, who is so like her beautiful aunt, is now with them. All the family are expected down, upon their return from Dudley House."

Lord Fortescue rose, then again reseated himself, saying, " When that happens, Robarts, let me know. You may leave me now : go to your Phœbe ; enjoy, while you can, the happiness now within your reach."

" Thank you, my lord ; but I would rather stay, and help you to dress. I am to see Phœbe in the evening."

The Viscount consented, and Robarts saw the tear yet trembling in his eye : he sighed affectionately ; he wished that his master was as happy as himself, but he knew the wish to be a vain one.

Lord Fortescue retired earlier than usual from the dinner-table : all his family saw that something had disturbed him, yet none ventured to inquire the cause ; it was, however, generally attributed to his anxiety

for the health of Mrs. Fortescue, who, on her part, endeavoured to be as cheerful as possible, and to submit to the orders of Sir Walter, lest she should be compelled to relinquish going to the Marchioness's ball.

Henry, delighted with the placidity of her looks, thought of every thing that could afford her amusement: he ordered from Town a collection of the best novels, and read them to her during the hours she passed in her own apartments. At other times he would persuade her to walk in the beautiful fields and lanes which were near to the Lodge, or drive her in his curri- cle along the highly picturesque road, lead- ing to the busy scene of her heart's ardent wishes. Every trifle that he imagined would give her pleasure was instantly procured; and he felt repaid for his unceasing atten- tion by the gratitude she displayed for his kindness.

Sidney, meanwhile, prudently resolved to shun another interview with the danger- ous, the seducing beauty. If he walked near the spot where he had seen her, it was

in company with Cecil or Miss Aveland. He had met Lady Elvira and her sister in an open carriage, as he was walking through the village with Julia; and the angry look which her ladyship darted at his amiable friend did not escape his notice.

The more he associated with Miss Aveland, the more warmly his heart acknowledged her virtues: a consciousness of his own unworthiness alone kept him from avowing the deep sense he had of her merits, and of soliciting her affection: he saw also the partiality of his father and his whole family for his sweet little comforter: he owned the power she possessed over himself, but he nobly determined not to take advantage of her evident tenderness, until he had completely gained the ascendancy over his feelings; until he could with truth and sincerity of heart declare himself attached to her alone.

The high sense of honour which regulated his conduct towards Miss Aveland proved that he was not totally unworthy the pure and tender love which he had

from their first meeting inspired her with ; and gave his family a convincing proof, that although he might have been led into an act of disobedience, by the alluring beauty of the Earl's daughter, yet, in every other respect, he was wholly deserving of the warmest affection — their fullest confidence. The Viscount, although ignorant of the real cause of his son's late dejection of spirits, yet secretly felt assured that to Julia alone he was indebted for their restoration. With indescribable transport he beheld the manly and handsome features of his eldest son once more assume their natural animation. "The daughter of my old and valued friend," thought Lord Fortescue, "has brought about this happy change; and my mind is at length freed from the dreadful apprehension of my boy having bestowed his affections on a child of my enemy."

END OF VOL. II.





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